ENGLISH READINGS FOR SCHOOL

"On bokès for to rede I me delyte."

Chaucer.

English Readings for Schools

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Thomas Carlyle

Thomas CARLYLE'S ESSAY ON BURNS

WITH POEMS AND SONGS FROM BURNS

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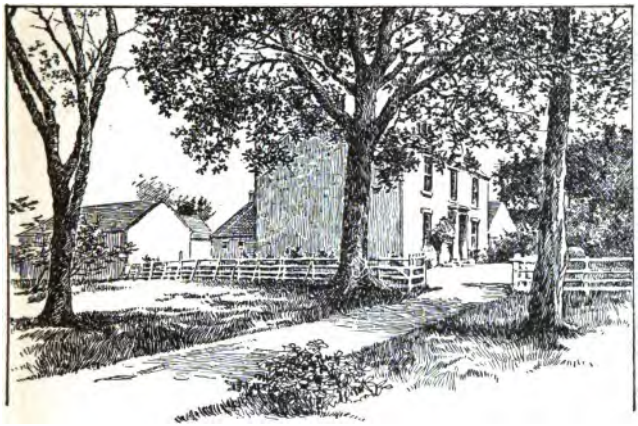

Craigenputtock

INTRODUCTION

I

CARLYLE'S LIFE AND WORKS

SELDOM can a more congenial task fall to the hands of a critic than that which came to Thomas Carlyle in reviewing Lockhart's *Life of Burns*. This biography was the immediate text or occasion of Carlyle's essay on the poet. But behind it was an experience of life so similar to that of Burns that it bred in Carlyle a penetrating sympathy and comprehension. Carlyle like Burns had sprung straight from the soil of Scotland; he, too, was a peasant born (1795) in a three-roomed cottage, which his father, James Carlyle, had built with his own hands at Ecclefechan, ten miles across from the English border. He, too, was bred to the bitter uses of poverty. His mother, Margaret

Aitken Carlyle, learned to write in order that she might send letters to her son when he had left home; his brothers and sisters worked on the farm with hard manual toil. "Often," says Carlyle, "we have lived for months on porridge and potatoes with no other condiment than what our own cow yielded." Only sheer force of genius lifted Carlyle, and that tardily in life, above the almost overwhelming obstacles that beset him.

With such a background, how well fitted was he to interpret the struggle of another Scotch writer born into like conditions. Burns was only one year older than Carlyle's father, who once had seen the poet. James Carlyle, "standing in Bob Scott's smithy, heard some one say, 'There is the poet Burns.' He went to look and saw a man with boots on, like a well-dressed farmer, walking down on the opposite side of the burn." Though James Carlyle never read three pages of Burns in all his life, the tradition of this glimpse of the poet passed down to his son Thomas Carlyle, and made Burns seem more intimately a part of his neighborhood. Burns was, indeed, born not far away in Ayr of the Lowlands, looked on much the same physical environment, fought much the same battle against desperate poverty. And so when Carlyle writes on Burns, it is as one who has met life on the same terms. Carlyle's essay shows a justness of insight, a tenderness of understanding, such as a critic achieves only in the happiest moments. Among Carlyle's voluminous works, this discriminating tribute from one great Scotsman to another, remains one of his acknowledged masterpieces.

Long years of preparation, of course, preceded this essay on Burns, which was written when Carlyle was thirty-three years old. The Scotch passion for education, which has sent many a penniless lad from a peasant farm to the

university, was strong in Carlyle's father, and made him devote himself, after the day's work was over, to teach his five-year-old boy arithmetic. Then he sent him to the village school, where he was adjudged "complete" in English at seven. But perhaps the best early lessons the boy had, came from contact with his father and the sterling inheritance derived from him. "I know Robert Burns," Carlyle says, "and I knew my father; yet were you to ask me which had the greater natural faculty, I might actually pause before replying! Never, of all men I have seen, has one come personally in my way in whom the endowment from Nature and the Arena from Fortune were utterly out of all proportion." But since he was a man of acute perceptions, of natural logic, with a way of getting, first-hand, at the heart of a matter, life had educated the elder Carlyle richly outside of the schools. His trenchant style gave extraordinary vividness to his speech, which had fame through the country-side. "That bold glowing style of his, flowing free from the untutored Soul, full of metaphors (though he knew not what a metaphor was) with all manner of potent words. . . . Nothing did I ever hear him undertake to render visible, which did not become almost ocularly so. . . . The fault was that he exaggerated (which tendency I also inherit); yet only in description and for the sake chiefly of humorous effect." Thomas Carlyle, master of invective, of wild Gargantuan humor, of mingled words of vision had his first lessons from the living speech of his father. From him, too, he had the great lesson of honest toil; "Let me write my Books as he built his Houses!"

When nine years old, the young Carlyle started off with his father one bright morning on foot for the Annandale Grammar School, his mother in tears at their first separation. Here the boy learned Latin, French, and mathe-

matics so well that a month before he was fourteen, he was ready for Edinburgh University, and walked the distance of eighty miles, his bundle over his shoulder, a whistling companion, Tom Smail, by his side. Thus did he make his entry into that university which was later to honor him as its Lord Rector. The professors and the academic work seem to have counted singularly little in his development. To one man only did Carlyle feel indebtedness, to Professor Leslie, in whose subject, mathematics, Carlyle worked with distinction. In Leslie's *Elements of Geometry* (1817) appears this interesting note: "The solution of this important problem now inserted in the text, was suggested to me by an ingenious young mathematician, Mr. Thomas Carlyle, formerly my pupil." Later, in 1822, Carlyle translated very admirably Legendre's *Geometry*. But geometry which stood before him long as "the noblest of all sciences," gave way in time to more pregnant inquiries. "What the Universities can mainly do for you,—what I have found the University did for me," said Carlyle some fifty-five years later in his Lord Rector's address, is, "That it taught me to read." The immense range and variety of his reading through these years and the years of his teaching—from Berkeley's *Principles of Knowledge* and Newton's *Principia* to Miss Porter's *Scottish Chiefs*—impress one deeply; the philosophers, historians, the Latin and French writers, were all levied on for their contribution. Like Herr Teufelsdröckh, Carlyle might say of his university: "I learned on my own strength to read fluently in almost all cultivated languages on almost all subjects and sciences." With such an equipment, Carlyle completed his university career at the age of eighteen.

The next ten years of Carlyle's life (1813–23) were the real test of his mettle; few men have met a more severe

test. How to live, the first problem, solved itself by his acceptance of a position as mathematical tutor, through the indorsement of Professor Leslie, at Annan Academy, "a situation flatly contradictory to all ideals or wishes of mine;" and later, another teaching post at Kirkcaldy, where he met his life-long friend Edward Irving. In the dreariness of those years the friendship of Irving, without whom "I had never known what the communion of man with man means," stands out as a divine compensation. With his vehement, restless temperament, Carlyle was ill-fitted to be a teacher, and the utter irksomeness of the work led him to resign (1818) and return to Edinburgh to eke out existence by private lessons and by translating French scientific pamphlets. Food from the home farm—oatmeal, butter, and cakes, kept him at times from actual want. Even as early as this, he was suffering from dyspepsia, which "gnawed like a rat at his vitals" and gave unendurable pain. "Solitary, eating out my own heart, fast losing my health, too, a prey to nameless struggles and miseries, which have yet a kind of horror to them in my thoughts; three weeks without any kind of sleep from impossibility to be free of noise,"—this is Carlyle's memory of those bitter Edinburgh days which would have crushed any man of less indomitable will.

At the same time, he was passing through a religious struggle in which the grounds of faith seemed tottering. It happened to be a period of hard times,—food at famine prices, laborers out of work, so that the world looked just then particularly out of joint. Surely it was against great odds that Carlyle was fighting,—against physical pain, against poverty closing in so sharply as to threaten to forbid his career as a writer, against doubts that swept his inner being with anguish. Suddenly, when he was strolling on the Leith Walk in June, 1821, there came to

him a kind of powerful baptism of faith, which put the whole army of miscreant doubts to flight. "I asked myself: 'What *art* thou afraid of? Wherefore, like a coward, dost thou forever pip and whimper, and go cowering and trembling?' And as I thought, there rushed like a stream of fire over my whole soul, and I shook base fear away from me forever. I was strong; of unknown strength; a spirit; almost a god. . . . It is from this hour I incline to date my spiritual new birth; perhaps I directly thereupon began to be a man." So Carlyle, with mystic autobiographic reference, describes the experience in *Sartor Resartus*. To enter the church, however, as Carlyle's parents, when they sent him to the university had predestined him, was an utter impossibility. He himself had thought of the law, but decided that it was an endless series of cases between "Blockhead A and Blockhead B," all sham and futility! To write—that was the real goal of his desire.

Fortunately just at this time a new intellectual impulse was bearing him forward to what was to be his distinctive contribution to English letters. Carlyle began to learn German on account of his interest in mineralogy. With the aid of a grammar procured from London, a lexicon, a few books imported from Hamburg, some lessons from a Mr. Jardine in return for French lessons, he forged his way toward a fairly wide acquaintance with the language. "I have lived riotously with Schiller, Goethe, and the rest: they are the greatest men at present with me," he writes to a friend; and again, "I could tell you much about the new Heaven and new Earth which a slight study of German literature has revealed to me." Very fittingly Carlyle's first published book was a translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (1824). The London *Times* quoted part of the *Meister* by this unknown translator and so gave

Carlyle his "first public nod of approval." He was now fairly launched in his German work. In 1823–24 his *Life of Schiller* was appearing in the *London Magazine*, a biography full of vivid charm and insight, which was later translated into German, with an eulogistic preface by Goethe.

The significance of Goethe and Schiller for Carlyle lies partly, perhaps chiefly, in the clarification which they brought to him, in a period of mental and spiritual turbulence, seeking, as he was, something which would give unity to human experience. Their message led him triumphant toward the light, and he in turn became its spokesman to England. Schiller's struggle in life was not unlike Carlyle's. He, too, began in obscurity, spent his young energy against hostile circumstances, and finally by his indomitable will and genius won his way to the highest place in German literature—second only to Goethe. To one battling as Carlyle was in his chosen career, Schiller was a stirring symbol of the power of spirit over material obstacles. To Goethe Carlyle's indebtedness is greater. For many generations of men, Goethe has held the mystic key to life; as Matthew Arnold reminds us, "This man understood all the sicknesses of the modern world and had the secret of their cure." At first, in *Wilhelm Meister*, Carlyle saw much inanity, but gradually it revealed itself to him as Goethe's "spiritual history," and more than that, "the emblem of all true men's in these days." With passionate eagerness Carlyle grasped the central thought of the *Meister's Travels*, "the change from inward imprisonment, doubt and discontent, into freedom, belief, and clear activity." It is no wonder that he felt "endlessly indebted to Goethe in this business. He in his fashion, I perceived, had traveled the steep road before me—the first of the moderns."

The next ten years mark the period of Carlyle's work as

a reviewer. From 1824 to 1834 he was busy with that vast body of essays which constitute his *Miscellanies*. In June, 1824, Carlyle went to London, with the Bullers, for whose sons he had been tutor the two preceding years while at work on *Wilhelm Meister*. This relation with the Bullers he terminated abruptly, soon after reaching London, and now definitely embarked on literature as his sole support. In the struggle to keep alive, Carlyle had begun to write articles for Brewster's *Encyclopedia*, contributing sixteen in all on a great variety of subjects, beginning with Montaigne and ending with Pitt. This experience very naturally pointed the way toward other work of the same kind. A letter of introduction to Jeffrey, editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, led to a friendship which opened the doors of that magazine at once.

Carlyle's marriage (1826) counts in his life with special significance. Jane Welsh was above him in social position, a woman of extraordinary mental acuteness and vivacity, of brilliant charm. Her personality makes her a figure of almost equal interest with Carlyle. It was a strange marriage for Jane Welsh; her friends recognized that Carlyle was not the man to make any woman happy in the ordinary sense; it was not in him, any more than it was in Dean Swift, to create what Burns calls "a happy fireside clime." His dyspepsia drove him at times to the verge of madness; his writing was produced in such turmoil and stress that it led to the highest degree of nervous irritability; his temperament expressed itself in explosive utterance regardless of anyone; even his doting mother admits he was "gey ill to live with." The Carlyles settled in Comely Bank, Edinburgh, and soon through Mrs. Carlyle's wonderful social gifts and her equally wonderful conversation, they attracted to their home some of the best minds in Edinburgh—Sir William Hamilton, Sir

David Brewster, John Wilson ("Christopher North"), Jeffrey, De Quincey, and many lesser lights. Jeffrey's first call at Comely Bank made him Mrs. Carlyle's warm friend for life and increased his eagerness to serve her husband.

From Comely Bank came the first papers published in the *Edinburgh Review* on Richter and Goethe. But the essays brought so little money, and difficulties pressed so hard, that the Carlyles had to leave Edinburgh to go to live on a remote farm inherited by Mrs. Carlyle, Craigenputtock, famous in literary history as "the dreariest spot in the British dominions." Here for six years (1828–34) the Carlyles lived, with only occasional absences, in utter isolation. Craigenputtock is on a bleak upland, seven hundred feet above the sea, where vegetation is stunted, where winter beats with relentless storm for a longer time than elsewhere in Scotland. Of neighbors and towns there are none for sixteen miles. Carlyle's brother Alexander and a sister took charge of the farm, but gave it up in failure at the end.

For Mrs. Carlyle life at Craigenputtock was full of hardship and bitter loneliness. Often the heavy labor of the household fell on her shoulders, labor for which her delicate health and lack of experience rendered her entirely unfit. It was a necessity for Carlyle to be much alone, to think out his thoughts in his study, away from the slightest sound of noise, or in solitary rides over the hills on horseback, so that Mrs. Carlyle was shut out from the close companionship with her husband which would have made "the desert" endurable. Her health so visibly failed that the Jeffreys and other Edinburgh friends who came for brief visits in the summer, viewed the Craigenputtock experiment with anxious concern. Carlyle was too preoccupied to realize how harshly the conditions bore

on his wife. Sometimes for three months at a time no one would come to their door. So unusual was a visitor that when Emerson, on his first trip to England, sought them out, Carlyle describes it as "the first journey since Noah's deluge undertaken to Craigenputtock." A memorable meeting it was when this "sky messenger alighted to me at Craigenputtock and vanished in the blue again," for it began one of the few lasting friendships of Carlyle's life.

For Carlyle's literary work, these years at Craigenputtock were very fruitful; the isolation, the healthy outdoor life, gave him time to delve into the recesses of his being, to find himself in the world of thought, to speak his own authentic message. Other reviews opened their doors to his articles—*The Foreign Review*, *Frazer's Magazine*, and *The New Monthly*. Three bulky volumes of *Miscellanies* are composed in large part of the essays written at Craigenputtock on many subjects, but chiefly on German literature. In all these papers, the absolute integrity and soundness of Carlyle's information is very striking. He spared no pains; he brought to bear the vast resources of his reading on each new problem; he sent forth work thorough and sincere to the utmost of his capacity. The essay on Burns was the first of the essays written after settling at Craigenputtock.

Besides these reviews, Carlyle wrote there *Sartor Resartus*, which has been the puzzlement of pedestrian minds ever since and the despair of critics. All his extreme mannerisms blaze forth in this remarkable book, which presents his philosophy of life through the medium of an imaginary German Professor, Herr Teufelsdröckh. It is a clothes philosophy, expressing the idea that external things are but the vesture of spirit animating from within. As a means of expounding abstract truths, the form of *Sartor Resartus* "is daringly original." It is not an autobiog-

raphy, not a romance, not a philosophical treatise, yet in a sense it is all these combined. Carlyle "invents the erudite German Professor of Things-in-General, of whom he is student and interpreter; sedately reproves the professor for going too far, after one of his long harangues, and so satirizes the method of German writers lost in minutiæ." It is "mystically autobiographic" in that the professor's experiences are similar to Carlyle's own; in form and in essence the most distinctive expression of Carlyle's peculiar genius.

In 1834, the Carlyles abandoned Craigenputtock for London, and entered upon a new era of life. The work of the reviewer was practically over. Carlyle had served his long apprenticeship. He was now to embark on those larger literary labors which make the substance of his fame. It is very noteworthy how slowly recognition came, that until the publication of the *French Revolution* (1837) in his forty-second year, he had won no considerable place for himself. Keats, who was born in the same year as Carlyle, wrote the poems that have made his name cherished the world over, before death overtook him in his twenty-fifth year. Had Carlyle's life ended then, he would have gone forth quite unknown. Shelley, who was only three years older than Carlyle, accomplished his work and was laid to rest near Keats in the English cemetery at Rome, not quite thirty years old. Byron eight years older than Carlyle, died at thirty-six, at the high tide of his fame. Macaulay, who was five years younger than Carlyle, was a commanding figure in England before Carlyle had achieved anything like national prominence. It is interesting to place Carlyle thus among his contemporaries, because it shows by comparison not only the late expression of his power, but also the totally different world of thought in which he moved. Macaulay's whole philoso-

phy and attitude toward life is separated by an enormous span from Carlyle's. Macaulay exemplifies the satisfaction with mechanism as such for bettering the world, pride in the achievements of our civilization, unlimited faith in political reforms as cures for social injustice, entire complacency with our industrial progress. From this point of view as well as from the point of view of the romantic poets contemporary with him, Carlyle was equally removed. He comes to us thundering from under his prophet's mantle to put away all such vanities, to accept the hard terms of life heroically, to work and ask not why. Literature appeals to Carlyle as a means of promulgating his views on the duty and destiny of man, of bringing some "gospel tidings." His criticism is largely destructive, an attack on shams, conventionalities, bogies, and political panaceas. Nothing will help mankind but the renovation of the spirit within, and all this energy spent on externals is sheer futility. In our civilization and material prosperity, he discerns no cause for gratulation, but rather the constant peril of mistaking externals as ends in themselves.

The French Revolution (1837) is the great milestone in Carlyle's career. Arrived in London (1834) with £200 or £300 as a reserve, the Carlyles settled in Cheyne Row, where in later days many other notables have lived: Turner, George Eliot, Rossetti, Swinburne, and Meredith. *The French Revolution*, the first-fruit of the London life, met dramatic eclipse at the outset. When Carlyle had finished the first volume, he lent it to John Stuart Mill, who in turn lent it to a Mrs. Taylor. Mrs. Taylor's servant accidentally burned the entire manuscript. The Carlyles were in sore financial straits; there was "bitter thrift" indeed in that household when this sudden loss threatened to overwhelm them. Memorable, indeed, must have been that visit of Mill when, "distraction in his aspect," he came to

announce the burning, and stayed two mortal hours! What reparation Mill could make, he did by giving a check for £200, only half of which Carlyle could be persuaded to accept. Doggedly Carlyle set to work to rewrite, though he had no notes, no copy to help him, though the act of composition was like walking through torturing flames. When, at last, it was done, he burst forth to his wife: "You have not had for a hundred years any book that comes more directly and flamingly from the heart of a living man."

The French Revolution is a magnificent epic, a vast prose poem, written in flames, full of episodes, dramatic situations, brilliant character studies. Such history, with all the glamour of fiction, the intensity, the passion, the concreteness, the prodigality, was never seen of man before, and remains to-day a marvel of constructive boldness and realism. No one should miss acquaintance with some of the great passages in the book, such as the fall of the Bastille, the court at Versailles, the death of Mirabeau, and the Reign of Terror. This historic material is but another version in more dramatic and poetic form of what Carlyle preached in *Sartor*, of what in all his books he continued to preach—the fate of shams. Dickens is said to have "carried a copy of *The French Revolution* with him wherever he went. Southey read it six times over. Thackeray reviewed it enthusiastically. Even Jeffrey generously admitted that Carlyle had succeeded upon lines in which he had himself foretold inevitable failure." Macaulay, Hallam, and Brougham could no longer withstand their recognition that "a star of the first magnitude in English literature" had arisen. *The French Revolution*, written in Carlyle's prime of manhood, is, in the opinion of many, incomparably his masterpiece.

But the book did not immediately bring money to its

author, who was reduced to his last resources. Miss Martineau and other friends arranged for a course of lectures in London, secured enough subscribers to insure a year's living expenses for the thrifty Cheyne Row household. This was the beginning of four courses of lectures—on German Literature, the History of European Literature, Revolutions, and Heroes. The lectures were entirely successful in spite of Carlyle's blackest forebodings; and fashionable audiences went away deeply impressed by his sincere and noble intelligence. Carlyle was now himself a duly recognized great man, yet with all the simplicity of his up-bringing on a peasant farm and with a strong Scotch accent. "There he stood, a spare figure, lacking one inch of six feet, . . . rugged of feature; brow abrupt like a low cliff, craggy over eyes deep-set, . . . full of rolling fire; . . . dark, short, thick hair, not crisp but wavy as rock-rooted, tide-swayed weed."

Carlyle's first audience among readers, his first ardent following, was in America. Emerson, ever the most loyal of friends, conceived the idea of publishing Carlyle's books in this country, later assuming even the financial responsibility; "I will," he protests enthusiastically, "summon to the bargain all the Yankee in my constitution, and multiply and divide like a lion." Of the venture Carlyle writes to his brother: "When not a penny had been realized in England, £150 sent by Emerson for *The French Revolution!* Was any braver thing ever heard of? £150 from beyond the salt seas, while not a sixpence could be realized here in one's own country by the thing! I declare my American friends are right fellows, and have done their affairs with effect!" Emerson also published Carlyle's essays in book form, and seems thus to have set the fashion for other writers to do likewise with their magazine articles. With the success of the lectures and later of *The French*

Revolution, and with a competence left to Mrs. Carlyle at her mother's death, Carlyle was relieved from money difficulties for the rest of his life. "The battle was over and we were sore wounded."

The next major achievement of Carlyle was his *Cromwell*, published in 1845. As far back as 1822, in a letter to Jane Welsh, he spoke of this project; "Four months ago, I had a splendid plan of treating the history of England during the Commonwealth in a new style . . . by grouping together the most singular manifestations of mind that occurred then. Already my characters were fixed upon—Laud, Fox, Clarendon, Cromwell, Milton, Hampden." At sixty-three he took up the work, in modified form, and poured years of unremitting toil and energy on dry-as-dust folios of that long-winded period. He visited the battle-fields in person; he collected all available records of the times. The book is not a life of Cromwell—that remains to be written; it is *The Letters and Speeches of Cromwell* with notes and connecting narrative by Carlyle. Of unity and artistic form it obviously possesses little; the nature of the material makes it difficult to weave a well-regulated narrative about so many scattered gleanings. Broken as it is, it has passages of matchless poetry in prose, of swift, characterizing flashes of genius; of memorable description, such as the Battle of Dunbar; it has, moreover, revised the judgment of the English people on Cromwell and his period. Cromwell is, of course, the kind of grim forceful hero with whom Carlyle had peculiar sympathy. Even those who do not admit Carlyle's view of Cromwell, admit the service he rendered in his interpretation of the English Revolution, the eloquence and fervid beauty of his style.

All Carlyle's history is only extended biography. Certainly *Frederick the Great* (1858–65) is a vast portrait gal-

lery of important and unimportant figures; of high court princes and princelings, of back-stair favorites, of intolerable German *fraus*, and corpulent generals. Against this intricate background, stands the figure of Frederick with his god-given right to rule, a right accorded all Carlyle's heroes. The colossal proportions of the book, the endless anecdotes and episodes, leave an impression of hurly-burly. While not many to-day except hardy Teutons, read all these volumes from cover to cover, every one reads with delight certain parts of this kaleidoscopic survey of German life in the eighteenth century, and carries away a new sense of the organizing force of Frederick, even if Carlyle fails to make of him wholly a hero. A German translation of *Frederick* appeared and met warm acclaim. Carlyle was decorated in 1874 with the Prussian order Pour le Merité, founded by Frederick.

There remains a group of shorter writings by Carlyle, some of which rank as of first importance. The lectures on heroes published in book form have become, perhaps of all Carlyle's writings, the most widely known. *Heroes and Hero Worship* reveals sharply Carlyle's favorite theory of the great man—that the world is ever in need of him, is ever refashioned after his ideals, is lifted out of impotence mainly by his clarion call. The great man as leader is the subject of *Hero Worship*, of *The Life of Schiller*, of the essays on *Goethe*, of the chief actors in *The French Revolution*, of *Cromwell*, of *Frederick*. Emerson significantly points out the limitation in this point of view,—"He (Carlyle) had his eye fixed mainly on the doings of certain leaders, and far too little on the general stream of thought and life which carried both leaders and followers along with it." *Characteristics*, *Chartism*, *Past and Present*, *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, represent Carlyle's political theories, his distrust of the ballot as a cure for all evils, his protest

against sentimental legislation, his arraignment of our age for depending on external machinery instead of spiritual regeneration. This aspect of his work need not detain us, though no one should miss acquaintance with the exquisite and unforgettable sketch of twelfth century life in *Past and Present.*

The later years of Carlyle were full of honors. In 1865 he accepted the Lord Rectorship of Edinburgh University, following Gladstone. His address on that occasion is for every student an eternal possession, so full is it of vital matter and mellow beauty. A public oration followed the address; students pressed about him, some shedding tears; they followed him to his brother's lodging, crowding and hurrahing. "They gave me one cheer more—something in the tone of it which did for the first time go into my heart. Poor young men, so well affected toward the poor old brother or grandfather here, and in such a black whirlpool of a world, all of us." The effect of this speech, which was published in full by newspapers all over the land, was to create a fresh interest in his works. *Sartor Resartus*, which had lain for more than a decade in neglected contempt, had twenty thousand copies sold now in a shilling edition. Times had changed, indeed, from the day when it had only two admirers, a Catholic priest in Cork and Emerson in Concord. In 1874 Lord Beaconsfield, the Prime Minister, desired to confer on him, on the part of the queen, the Grand Cross of Bath and a pension, a distinguished honor which Carlyle declined, waiting, with delicate consideration until after Tennyson, to whom a baronry was offered, had signified his acceptance. The high place which Carlyle had won was henceforth uncontested, and until his death all sharp criticism seemed to be stilled. The age at last was moved to do full honor to its great man.

After Mrs. Carlyle's death, which followed the Edinburgh address, Carlyle lived with slowly declining strength until 1881. On his eightieth birthday the literary men of Germany, under the leadership of Ranke, sent him a telegram of congratulation; Bismarck added his word of praise; and a group of British admirers presented a medallion portrait by Boehm. To the library of Harvard College, Carlyle bequeathed all the books he had used in preparation for *Cromwell* and *Frederick*. His personality was as rugged and unique as his style. Intensely loyal to his family, he knew no pleasure so satisfying as to sit with his mother by the fireside of her cottage, each of them smoking a pipe, in quiet talk. He was laid to rest, not in Westminster, where the nation would have wished, but with his own people at Ecclefechan. In later years he was much entertained by people of rank and position, and counted among his friends and callers at Cheyne Row practically every distinguished man of letters or public affairs in London. But he retained to the last the simplicity of his early trainings, and a raciness and vigor which gave flavor to his least utterance. His conversation was caustic, dogmatic, and when he was roused, devastating as a blast from a hot furnace; a torrent of eloquence and invective, with flashes of primitive great-hearted humor. Literary taste has moved somewhat away from Carlyle in recent years, but for those who are awakening to the significance of life, he will ever have an invigorating message.

Birthplace of Robert Burns

II

LIFE OF BURNS

In a little clay-built cottage on the banks of the Doon in Ayrshire, Robert Burns first saw the light on January 25, 1759. The cottage, built by his father, consisting of two rooms, still stands by the roadside. Tumult attended his entrance into the world, for a wild storm, a few days after his birth, blew down the gable of the cottage and drove mother and child to a neighbor's for shelter. As he says later:

"A blast o' Janwar win'
Blew hansel in on Robin."

His father, of good farmer stock, had at this time a small nursery garden from which he supported his family. Robert was the eldest of seven children. With the innate Scotch love of education, the father taught the lad when

the day's work was done, and later joined with four other families to engage John Murdock to be schoolmaster to their children, a post he held two and a half years. Burns's education in school was thus brief and fragmentary, but as thorough as it could be made by this excellent teacher. His father, as the children worked on the farm by his side, or as they sat about the fire on long winter evenings, continued unremittingly the task of instruction. He was a stern, religious man, of good natural parts, who bore so unequal a struggle with poverty that body and spirit were prematurely crushed. At thirteen, Robert Burns was threshing his father's grain; at fifteen, he was his father's chief laborer in the field. From his mother, he learned much of the old ballads and legends, and from an old woman in the family, the largest collections of tales and songs concerning "the devil, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, . . . enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery." From the few books available, he widened his outlook as much as possible, devoting himself especially to the two poets, Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson (whose verse was then coming out in *Ruddiman's Weekly Magazine*), and to a collection of old songs. "This (the book of songs), was my *vade-mecum*. I pored over them driving my cart, or walking to labor, song by song, verse by verse."

In 1766, the family moved to another farm, Mount Oliphant, "a ruinous bargain," where the struggle for existence became even sharper and more dispiriting. When successive crops began to fail through bad seasons, and the land was proving itself thin and unfruitful, letters from the landlord's agent would throw the whole family into bitter sorrow. These years of early toil were hard on the lad,—using up nervous strength he needed for manhood, making him stoop-shouldered, acquainting him too early with the tragedy his father was living, the tragedy

of an industrious, frugal man going to the wall in spite of every human effort. But such a life had its compensations, too, in strong family affection, in the homely piety which the father shed over the little group—so faithfully portrayed in *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, and the exhilarating contact with nature, which was storing the young poet's mind with sights and sounds and images. It was at Mt. Oliphant that Burns made his first song, of a country lass, who like himself labored in the field,—*Handsome Nell*. "You know," says Burns, "our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labors of the harvest. In my fifteenth summer my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself. . . . It was her favorite reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rime. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who read Greek and Latin; but my girl sang a song which was said to be composed by a county laird's son, on one of his father's maids with whom he was in love; and I saw no reason why I might not rime as well as he; for, excepting that he could shear sheep, and cast peats, his father living in the Moorlands, he had no more scholarcraft than myself. Thus with me began love and poetry."

The impulse to sing continued to stir in Burns, and from his eighteenth year, when the family moved to another farm at Tarbolton, to his twenty-fifth, it ripened slowly into fuller and fuller expression. Some outlet was necessary for a youth of high vitality, of witty and pithy speech, of great personal magnetism; and such an outlet from the grinding toil and monotony of the farm came to him in affairs of the heart. The simple rustic life with its ease of meeting between lad and lass afforded nothing else but this love gallantry. It was, indeed, the one resource of the country side. The original of *Mary Morison*, a servant

in a family at Cessnock Water, called forth in Burns an ardent affection which he embodied later in the song addressed to her. It was not until after his father's death (1784), when the family had moved to Mossgiel farm, that Burns's genius for poetry distinctly and unmistakably declared itself. At Tarbolton he had written *The Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie*, *My Nannie O*, *The Lass of Cessnock Banks*, *Bonny Peggy Alison*, and *Mary Morison*. But now, at Mossgiel, there was a spendid burst of song, perhaps the richest short period that we know of. Most of the songs mentioned by Carlyle are the fruit of this time.

The outer fortunes of the Burns family went from bad to worse with rapidity. In 1781 Burns started for Irvine to learn flax dressing, with the hope of utilizing to better advantage the flax grown on their own farm. At Irvine, Burns fell in with loose companions, whose influence was undermining; Carlyle fittingly refers to it as "the mud-bath." What little money he had he lost there; his flax-dressing shop was burned while he was off on a New Year's carousing; and he returned home to find his father dying of consumption. In March, 1784, Burns and his brother brought their widowed mother and the younger children to Mossgiel. Although Burns applied himself to the problem of farming with the utmost industry, the experiment was revealing itself a hopeless failure. Yet it was just at this time, 1784–86, when life seemed defeating him at every turn and poverty overwhelming his slender resources, that poetry welled up most abundantly in his heart and gave him solace for the wreck of his material fortune.

Burns finally decided in despair to throw up the farm and go to the West Indies to be agent on a plantation there. To get passage-money he published by subscription (July, 1786), in the neighboring town of Kilmarnock, a

first edition of his poems. Recognition was instantaneous. Even the farm-hands and servants were ready to give their hard earned wages, which they needed for the bare necessities of life, to possess a copy of Burns's poems. Professor Dugald Stewart, the famous metaphysician of Edinburgh University, was the first of the great world to seek Burns out, but others followed fast. On the eve of Burns's departure for Jamaica, a letter from Dr. Blacklock, the blind poet, urging another edition of the poems, decided Burns to stay in his native country and try his fortune in Edinburgh. Burns borrowed a pony and started forth to Edinburgh on what seems a kind of triumphant procession; everywhere along the way he was met by the people who knew the songs and wished to do honor to the poet. His brilliant gifts of conversation, his abounding sense of life, his genial camaraderie made him strike fire with all whom he met.

In Edinburgh his reception was no less remarkable. As Carlyle indicates, the great listened enrapt to his flow of racy, energetic speech, and respected the simplicity which made him as much at home in the drawing-room as on the farm. Lord Glencairn induced the Caledonian Hunt, a society of Scottish nobility, to guarantee by subscription a new edition of the *Poems*, from which Burns received £500. He associated with the brilliant minds of the capital, with Dugald Stewart, Blair, Robertson, and with the best of the nobility. The Duchess of Gordon was one of his staunchest admirers. From the houses where he was entertained, he returned at night to the humble lodging of a friend, where they shared a bed and room at three shillings a week.

Leaving Edinburgh with his little competence, Burns gave £180 to his mother, and with the rest purchased a new farm at Ellisland, where he installed Jean Armour as

his wife. Again the farm did not prosper, and to supplement his income, he took the post of exciseman, his wife continuing the dairy on the farm. In the performance of his duties, he rode over a district of some two hundred miles, in all kinds of weather, meeting all kinds of people. On these long, lonely rides, Burns composed many of his best poems, which come to us redolent of the outdoor world where they had their birth. Energy, the tang of life, humor, simplicity, love of all things real, mark these quick transcripts of the mood of man and external nature. They were written at white heat, and drew on Burns's mental force and vitality to the uttermost. His body, too early taxed beyond its strength, began to show signs of exhaustion, which were increased by occasional periods of dissipation. At the age of thirty-seven, Burns died at Dumfries, in poverty. With the irony attaching to human things, Burns was given a very splendid public funeral, with muffled drums, and military troops, and the sorrow of all Scotland a tribute at his feet. Various memorials have been built in his name, but his body of songs, two or three hundred in number, which quicken hearts the world over, is his enduring monument.

DESCRIPTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY: CARLYLE

THE best brief account of Carlyle is *The Life of Thomas Carlyle* in the *Great Writers Series*, by Richard Garnett, published by Walter Scott, London; or *Thomas Carlyle* in the *English Men of Letters Series*, by John Nichol, published by Harper and Brothers, New York. Carlyle's literary executor, G. A. Froude, has given us four large volumes of biographical material: *Thomas Carlyle, A History of the First Forty Years of his Life* (2 Vols.); and *Thomas Carlyle, A History of his Life in London* (2 Vols.), both published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Charles Eliot Norton has edited *The Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson*, 1834–72 (the Macmillan Company, New York); *The Correspondence of Goethe and Carlyle* (London, 1887); and *Reminiscences* (the Macmillan Company, New York). The literature on Carlyle is almost inexhaustible but the majority of readers will prefer, if they have time, to gain their knowledge of this writer from his own letters and reminiscences. To the list of letters should be added, *The Letters of Thomas Carlyle to his Youngest Sister*, edited by Professor C. T. Copeland, Boston, 1899. Only a few of the many interesting appreciations of Carlyle can be suggested:

Birrell, A., *Obiter Dicta, First Series*, London, 1884.
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1824. *Legendre's Elements of Geometry and Trigonometry.*
A translation from the French.

1824. *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship.*
A novel translated from the German of Goethe. (*See Intro.*, page xii.)

1825. *Life of Schiller.*
(*See Intro.*, page xiii.) This biography appeared originally in *The London Magazine*, Vol. VIII.

1827. *German Romance; Specimens of its Chief Authors.*
With biographical and critical notices. Vol. I, Musæus and La Motte-Fouqué; Vol. II, Tieck and Hoffmann; Vol. III, Jean Paul Richter; Vol. IV, Goethe.

1837. *French Revolution.*
(*See Intro.*, page xviii.)

1838. *Sartor Resartus.*
(*See Intro.*, page xvi.)

1839. *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays.*
Three volumes. A collection of essays published in various magazines.

1840. *Chartism.*
1838–39 saw the rise of a new political movement called Chartism, a disturbance growing out of the failure of the Reform Bill to alleviate the misery of the people, and a demand for further liberty. Carlyle opposes this notion that political reform can avail.

1841. *Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History.*
(*See Intro.*, page xxii.) Six lectures, reported, with emendations.

1843. *Past and Present.*
Written after the Chartist riots of 1842, in the first seven weeks of 1843, published in April. The "Past" of the book is a record of life in the twelfth century, in which the mediæval regulation of life is contrasted with the rampant individualism of our own day.

1845. *Life and Letters of Oliver Cromwell.*
(*See Intro.*, page xxi.)

1850. *Latter-Day Pamphlets.*
Eight Numbers. The pamphlets began in 1850 and continued month after month, each appearing separately. No magazine would publish them. They represent Carlyle's attack on Radicalism.

1851. *Life of John Sterling.*
A biography of Carlyle's beloved friend, the "joyous youth, everlastingly striving"; a model biography.

1853. *Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question.*
The emancipation of the negroes seemed to Carlyle to expose a group of unfit people to the competition of life. He argued that they should be cared for under a modified régime of independence.

1858–65. *History of Frederick the Great.*
(*See Intro.*, page xxi.)

1866. *Inaugural Address at Edinburgh.*
(*See Intro.*, page xxiii.)

1867. *Shooting Niagara and After.*
This appeared first as an article in *Macmillan's Magazine* for August, 1867. It was corrected and republished as a pamphlet in September. The Tory Reform Bill was under way and seemed to Carlyle a futile measure: "England getting into the Niagara Rapids far sooner than I expected." He pictures the results of a nation's devoting itself solely to money-getting and hoping to make things right by a mere extension of the ballot.

1875. *The Early Kings of Norway.*
Sketches of the Norse kings, written at Carlyle's dictation. Carlyle was a great admirer of the Norse and Scandinavian qualities, which he thought the source of some of our best English virtues.

CARLYLE'S ESSAY ON BURNS

Edinburgh Review, No. 96. The Life of Robert Burns. By J. G. Lockhart. Edinburgh, 1828.

In the modern arrangements of society, it is no uncommon thing that a man of genius must, like Butler, "ask for bread and receive a stone;" for, in spite of our grand maxim of supply and demand, it is by no means the highest excellence that men are most forward to recognize. The inventor of a spinning-jenny is pretty sure of his reward in his own day; but the writer of a true poem, like the apostle of a true religion, is nearly as sure of the contrary. We do not know whether it is not an aggravation of the injustice, that there is generally a posthumous retribution. Robert Burns, in the course of Nature, might yet have been living; but his short life was spent in toil and penury; and he died, in the prime of his manhood, miserable and neglected: and yet already a brave mausoleum shines over his dust, and more than one splendid monument has been reared in other places to his fame; the street where he languished in poverty is called by his name; the highest personages in our literature have been proud to appear as his commentators and admirers; and here is the *sixth* narrative of his *Life* that has been given to the world!

Mr Lockhart thinks it necessary to apologize for this new attempt on such a subject: but his readers, we believe, will readily acquit him; or, at worst, will censure only the performance of his task, not the choice of it.

The character of Burns, indeed, is a theme that cannot easily become either trite or exhausted; and will probably gain rather than lose in its dimensions by the distance to which it is removed by Time. No man, it has been said, is a hero to his valet; and this is probably true; but the fault is at least as likely to be the valet's as the hero's. For it is certain that to the vulgar eye few things are wonderful that are not distant. It is difficult for men to believe that the man, the mere man whom they see, nay, perhaps painfully feel, toiling at their side through the poor jostlings of existence, can be made of finer clay than themselves. Suppose that some dining acquaintance of Sir Thomas Lucy's and neighbor of John a Combe's, had snatched an hour or two from the preservation of his game, and written us a Life of Shakespeare! What dissertations should we not have had,—not on *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, but on the wool-trade, and deer-stealing, and the libel and vagrant laws; and how the Poacher became a Player; and how Sir Thomas and Mr. John had Christian bowels, and did not push him to extremities! In like manner, we believe, with respect to Burns, that till the companions of his pilgrimage, the Honorable Excise Commissioners, and the Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt, and the Dumfries Aristocracy, and all the Squires and Earls, equally with the Ayr Writers, and the New and Old Light Clergy, whom he had to do with, shall have become invisible in the darkness of the Past, or visible only by light borrowed from *his* juxtaposition, it will be difficult to measure him by any true standard, or to estimate what he really was and did, in the eighteenth century, for his country and the world. It will be difficult, we say; but still a fair problem for literary historians; and repeated attempts will give us repeated approximations.

His former Biographers have done something, no doubt,

but by no means a great deal, to assist us. Dr. Currie and Mr. Walker, the principal of these writers, have both, we think, mistaken one essentially important thing: Their own and the world's true relation to their author, and the style in which it became such men to think and to speak of such a man. Dr. Currie loved the poet truly; more perhaps than he avowed to his readers, or even to himself; yet he everywhere introduces him with a certain patronizing, apologetic air; as if the polite public might think it strange and half unwarrantable that he, a man of science, a scholar and gentleman, should do such honor to a rustic. In all this, however, we readily admit that his fault was not want of love, but weakness of faith; and regret that the first and kindest of all our poet's biographers should not have seen farther, or believed more boldly what he saw. Mr. Walker offends more deeply in the same kind: and both err alike in presenting us with a detached catalogue of his several supposed attributes, virtues and vices, instead of a delineation of the resulting character as a living unity. This, however, is not painting a portrait; but gauging the length and breadth of the several features, and jotting down their dimensions in arithmetical ciphers. Nay, it is not so much as that: for we are yet to learn by what arts or instruments the mind *could* be so measured and gauged.

Mr. Lockhart, we are happy to say, has avoided both these errors. He uniformly treats Burns as the high and remarkable man the public voice has now pronounced him to be: and in delineating him, he has avoided the method of separate generalities, and rather sought for characteristic incidents, habits, actions, sayings; in a word, for aspects which exhibit the whole man, as he looked and lived among his fellows. The book accordingly, with all its deficiencies, gives more insight, we

think, into the true character of Burns, than any prior biography: though, being written on the very popular and condensed scheme of an article for *Constable's Miscellany*, it has less depth than we could have wished and expected from a writer of such power; and contains rather more, and more multifarious quotations than belong of right to an original production. Indeed, Mr. Lockhart's own writing is generally so good, so clear, direct and nervous, that we seldom wish to see it making place for another man's. However, the spirit of the work is throughout candid, tolerant and anxiously conciliating; compliments and praises are liberally distributed, on all hands, to great and small; and, as Mr. Morris Birkbeck observes of the society in the backwoods of America, "the courtesies of polite life are never lost sight of for a moment." But there are better things than these in the volume; and we can safely testify, not only that it is easily and pleasantly read a first time, but may even be without difficulty read again.

Nevertheless, we are far from thinking that the problem of Burns's Biography has yet been adequately solved. We do not allude so much to deficiency of facts or documents,—though of these we are still every day receiving some fresh accession,—as to the limited and imperfect application of them to the great end of Biography. Our notions upon this subject may perhaps appear extravagant; but if an individual is really of consequence enough to have his life and character recorded for public remembrance, we have always been of opinion that the public ought to be made acquainted with all the inward springs and relations of his character. How did the world and man's life, from his particular position, represent themselves to his mind? How did coexisting circumstances modify him from without; how did he modify these from

within? With what endeavors and what efficacy rule over them; with what resistance and what suffering sink under them? In one word, what and how produced was the effect of society on him; what and how produced was his effect on society? He who should answer these questions, in regard to any individual, would, as we believe, furnish a model of perfection in Biography. Few individuals, indeed, can deserve such a study; and many *lives* will be written, and, for the gratification of innocent curiosity, ought to be written, and read and forgotten, which are not in this sense *biographies*. But Burns, if we mistake not, is one of these few individuals; and such a study, at least with such a result, he has not yet obtained. Our own contributions to it, we are aware, can be but scanty and feeble; but we offer them with good-will, and trust they may meet with acceptance from those they are intended for.

Burns first came upon the world as a prodigy; and was, in that character, entertained by it, in the usual fashion, with loud, vague, tumultuous wonder, speedily subsiding into censure and neglect; till his early and most mournful death again awakened an enthusiasm for him, which, especially as there was now nothing to be done, and much to be spoken, has prolonged itself even to our own time. It is true, the "nine days" have long since elapsed; and the very continuance of this clamor proves that Burns was no vulgar wonder. Accordingly, even in sober judgments, where, as years passed by, he has come to rest more and more exclusively on his own intrinsic merits, and may now be well-nigh shorn of that casual radiance, he appears not only as a true British poet, but as one of the most considerable British men of the eighteenth century. Let it not be objected that he did little. He did much, if we consider where and how.

If the work performed was small, we must remember that he had his very materials to discover; for the metal he worked in lay hid under the desert moor, where no eye but his had guessed its existence; and we may almost say, that with his own hand he had to construct the tools for fashioning it. For he found himself in deepest obscurity, without help, without instruction, without model; or with models only of the meanest sort. An educated man stands, as it were, in the midst of a boundless arsenal and magazine, filled with all the weapons and engines which man's skill has been able to devise from the earliest time; and he works, accordingly, with a strength borrowed from all past ages. How different is *his* state who stands on the outside of that storehouse, and feels that its gates must be stormed, or remain forever shut against him! His means are the commonest and rudest; the mere work done is no measure of his strength. A dwarf behind his steam-engine may remove mountains; but no dwarf will hew them down with a pickax; and he must be a Titan that hurls them abroad with his arms.

It is in this last shape that Burns presents himself. Born in an age the most prosaic Britain had yet seen, and in a condition the most disadvantageous, where his mind, if it accomplished aught, must accomplish it under the pressure of continual bodily toil, nay, of penury and desponding apprehension of the worst evils, and with no furtherance but such knowledge as dwells in a poor man's hut, and the rimes of a Fergusson or Ramsay for his standard of beauty, he sinks not under all these impediments: through the fogs and darkness of that obscure region, his lynx eye discerns the true relations of the world and human life; he grows into intellectual strength, and trains himself into intellectual expertness. Impelled by the expansive movement of his own irrepressible soul, he

struggles forward into the general view; and with haughty modesty lays down before us, as the fruit of his labor, a gift, which Time has now pronounced imperishable. Add to all this, that his darksome drudging childhood and youth was by far the kindliest era of his whole life; and that he died in his thirty-seventh year: and then ask, If it be strange that his poems are imperfect, and of small extent, or that his genius attained no mastery in its art? Alas, his Sun shone as through a tropical tornado; and the pale Shadow of Death eclipsed it at noon! Shrouded in such baleful vapors, the genius of Burns was never seen in clear azure splendor, enlightening the world: but some beams from it did, by fits, pierce through; and it tinted those clouds with rainbow and orient colors, into a glory and stern grandeur, which men silently gazed on with wonder and tears!

We are anxious not to exaggerate; for it is exposition rather than admiration that our readers require of us here; and yet to avoid some tendency to that side is no easy matter. We love Burns, and we pity him; and love and pity are prone to magnify. Criticism, it is sometimes thought, should be a cold business; we are not so sure of this; but, at all events, our concern with Burns is not exclusively that of critics. True and genial as his poetry must appear, it is not chiefly as a poet, but as a man, that he interests and affects us. He was often advised to write a tragedy: time and means were not lent him for this; but through life he enacted a tragedy, and one of the deepest. We question whether the world has since witnessed so utterly sad a scene; whether Napoleon himself, left to brawl with Sir Hudson Lowe, and perish on his rock, "amid the melancholy main," presented to the reflecting mind such a "spectacle of pity and fear" as did this intrinsically nobler, gentler and perhaps greater

soul, wasting itself away in a hopeless struggle with base entanglements, which coiled closer and closer round him, till only death opened him an outlet. Conquerors are a class of men with whom, for most part, the world could well dispense; nor can the hard intellect, the unsympathizing loftiness and high but selfish enthusiasm of such persons inspire us in general with any affection; at best it may excite amazement; and their fall, like that of a pyramid, will be beheld with a certain sadness and awe. But a true Poet, a man in whose heart resides some effluence of Wisdom, some tone of the "Eternal Melodies," is the most precious gift that can be bestowed on a generation: we see in him a freer, purer development of whatever is noblest in ourselves; his life is a rich lesson to us; and we mourn his death as that of a benefactor who loved and taught us.

Such a gift had Nature, in her bounty, bestowed on us in Robert Burns; but with queenlike indifference she cast it from her hand, like a thing of no moment; and it was defaced and torn asunder, as an idle bauble, before we recognized it. To the ill-starred Burns was given the power of making man's life more venerable, but that of wisely guiding his own life was not given. Destiny,—for so in our ignorance we must speak,—his faults, the faults of others, proved too hard for him; and that spirit, which might have soared could it but have walked, soon sank to the dust, its glorious faculties trodden under foot in the blossom; and died, we may almost say, without ever having lived. And so kind and warm a soul; so full of inborn riches, of love to all living and lifeless things! How his heart flows out in sympathy over universal Nature; and in her bleakest provinces discerns a beauty and a meaning! The "Daisy" falls not unheeded under his plowshare; nor the ruined nest of that "wee, cowering, timorous beastie," cast forth, after all its provident

pains, to "thole the sleety dribble and cranreuch cauld." The "hoar visage" of Winter delights him; he dwells with a sad and oft-returning fondness in these scenes of solemn desolation; but the voice of the tempest becomes an anthem to his ears; he loves to walk in the sounding woods, for "it raises his thoughts to *Him that walketh on the wings of the wind.*" A true Poet-soul, for it needs but to be struck, and the sound it yields will be music! But observe him chiefly as he mingles with his brother men. What warm, all-comprehending fellow-feeling; what trustful, boundless love; what generous exaggeration of the object loved! His rustic friend, his nut-brown maiden, are no longer mean and homely, but a hero and a queen, whom he prizes as the paragons of Earth. The rough scenes of Scottish life, not seen by him in any Arcadian illusion, but in the rude contradiction, in the smoke and soil of a too harsh reality, are still lovely to him: Poverty is indeed his companion, but Love also, and Courage; the simple feelings, the worth, the nobleness, that dwell under the straw roof, are dear and venerable to his heart: and thus over the lowest provinces of man's existence he pours the glory of his own soul; and they rise, in shadow and sunshine, softened and brightened into a beauty which other eyes discern not in the highest. He has a just self-consciousness, which too often degenerates into pride; yet it is a noble pride, for defense, not for offense; no cold suspicious feeling, but a frank and social one. The Peasant Poet bears himself, we might say, like a King in exile: he is cast among the low, he feels himself equal to the highest; yet he claims no rank, that none may be disputed to him. The forward he can repel, the supercilious he can subdue; pretensions of wealth or ancestry are of no avail with him; there is a fire in that dark eye, under which the "insolence and condescension" cannot thrive. In his abasement, in his ex-

treme need, he forgets not for a moment the majesty of Poetry and Manhood. And yet, far as he feels himself above common men, he wanders not apart from them, but mixes warmly in their interests; nay, throws himself into their arms, and, as it were, entreats them to love him. It is moving to see how, in his darkest despondency, this proud being still seeks relief from friendship; unbosoms himself, often to the unworthy; and, amid tears, strains to his glowing heart a heart that knows only the name of friendship. And yet he was "quick to learn;" a man of keen vision, before whom common disguises afforded no concealment. His understanding saw through the hollowness even of accomplished deceivers; but there was a generous credulity in his heart. And so did our Peasant show himself among us; "a soul like an Æolian harp, in whose strings the vulgar wind, as it passed through them, changed itself into articulate melody." And this was he for whom the world found no fitter business than quarreling with smugglers and vintners, computing excise-dues upon tallow, and gauging ale-barrels! In such toils was that mighty Spirit sorrowfully wasted: and a hundred years may pass on, before another such is given us to waste.

All that remains of Burns, the Writings he has left, seem to us, as we hinted above, no more than a poor mutilated fraction of what was in him; brief, broken glimpses of a genius that could never show itself complete; that wanted all things for completeness: culture, leisure, true effort, nay, even length of life. His poems are, with scarcely any exception, mere occasional effusions; poured forth with little premeditation; expressing, by such means as offered, the passion, opinion, or humor of the hour. Never in one instance was it permitted him to grapple with any subject with the full collection of his

strength, to fuse and mold it in the concentrated fire of his genius. To try by the strict rules of Art such imperfect fragments, would be at once unprofitable and unfair. Nevertheless, there is something in these poems, marred and defective as they are, which forbids the most fastidious student of poetry to pass them by. Some sort of enduring quality they must have: for after fifty years of the wildest vicissitudes in poetic taste, they still continue to be read; nay, are read more and more eagerly, more and more extensively; and this not only by literary virtuosos, and that class upon whom transitory causes operate most strongly, but by all classes, down to the most hard, unlettered and truly natural class, who read little, and especially no poetry, except because they find pleasure in it. The grounds of so singular and wide a popularity, which extends, in a literal sense, from the palace to the hut, and over all regions where the English tongue is spoken, are well worth inquiring into. After every just deduction, it seems to imply some rare excellence in these works. What is that excellence?

To answer this question will not lead us far. The excellence of Burns is, indeed, among the rarest, whether in poetry or prose; but, at the same time, it is plain and easily recognized: his *Sincerity*, his indisputable air of Truth. Here are no fabulous woes or joys; no hollow fantastic sentimentalities; no wiredrawn refinings, either in thought or feeling: the passion that is traced before us has glowed in a living heart; the opinion he utters has risen in his own understanding, and been a light to his own steps. He does not write from hearsay, but from sight and experience; it is the scenes that he has lived and labored amidst, that he describes: those scenes, rude and humble as they are, have kindled beautiful emotions in his soul, noble thoughts, and definite resolves; and he

speaks forth what is in him, not from any outward call of vanity or interest, but because his heart is too full to be silent. He speaks it with such melody and modulation as he can; "in homely rustic jingle"; but it is his own, and genuine. This is the grand secret for finding readers and retaining them: let him who would move and convince others, be first moved and convinced himself. Horace's rule, *Si vis me flere*, is applicable in a wider sense than the literal one. To every poet, to every writer, we might say: Be true, if you would be believed. Let a man but speak forth with genuine earnestness the thought, the emotion, the actual condition of his own heart; and other men, so strangely are we all knit together by the tie of sympathy, must and will give heed to him. In culture, in extent of view, we may stand above the speaker, or below him; but in either case, his words, if they are earnest and sincere, will find some response within us; for in spite of all casual varieties in outward rank or inward, as face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man.

This may appear a very simple principle, and one which Burns had little merit in discovering. True, the discovery is easy enough: but the practical appliance is not easy; is indeed the fundamental difficulty which all poets have to strive with, and which scarcely one in the hundred ever fairly surmounts. A head too dull to discriminate the true from the false; a heart too dull to love the one at all risks, and to hate the other in spite of all temptations, are alike fatal to a writer. With either, or as more commonly happens, with both of these deficiencies combine a love of distinction, a wish to be original, which is seldom wanting, and we have Affectation, the bane of literature, as Cant, its elder brother, is of morals. How often does the one and the other front us, in poetry, as in life! Great poets themselves are not always free of

this vice; nay, it is precisely on a certain sort and degree of greatness that it is most commonly ingrafted. A strong effort after excellence will sometimes solace itself with a mere shadow of success; he who has much to unfold, will sometimes unfold it imperfectly. Byron, for instance, was no common man: yet if we examine his poetry with this view, we shall find it far enough from faultless. Generally speaking, we should say that it is not true. He refreshes us, not with the divine fountain, but too often with vulgar strong waters, stimulating indeed to the taste, but soon ending in dislike, or even nausea. Are his Harolds and Giaours, we would ask, real men; we mean, poetically consistent and conceivable men? Do not these characters, does not the character of their author, which more or less shines through them all, rather appear a thing put on for the occasion; no natural or possible mode of being, but something intended to look much grander than nature? Surely, all these stormful agonies, this volcanic heroism, superhuman contempt and moody desperation, with so much scowling, and teeth-gnashing, and other sulphurous humor, is more like the brawling of a player in some paltry tragedy, which is to last three hours, than the bearing of a man in the business of life, which is to last threescore and ten years. To our minds there is a taint of this sort, something which we should call theatrical, false, affected, in every one of these otherwise so powerful pieces. Perhaps *Don Juan*, especially the latter parts of it, is the only thing approaching to a *sincere* work, he ever wrote; the only work where he showed himself, in any measure, as he was; and seemed so intent on his subject as, for moments, to forget himself. Yet Byron hated this vice; we believe, heartily detested it: nay, he had declared formal war against it in words. So difficult is it even for the strongest to make this primary attainment, which

might seem the simplest of all: to *read its own consciousness without mistakes*, without errors involuntary or wilful! We recollect no poet of Burns's susceptibility who comes before us from the first, and abides with us to the last, with such a total want of affectation. He is an honest man, and an honest writer. In his successes and his failures, in his greatness and his littleness, he is ever clear, simple, true, and glitters with no luster but his own. We reckon this to be a great virtue; to be, in fact, the root of most other virtues, literary as well as moral.

Here, however, let us say, it is to the Poetry of Burns that we now allude; to those writings which he had time to meditate, and where no special reason existed to warp his critical feeling, or obstruct his endeavor to fulfil it. Certain of his Letters, and other fractions of prose composition, by no means deserve this praise. Here, doubtless, there is not the same natural truth of style; but on the contrary, something not only stiff, but strained and twisted; a certain high-flown inflated tone; the stilting emphasis of which contrasts ill with the firmness and rugged simplicity of even his poorest verses. Thus no man, it would appear, is altogether unaffected. Does not Shakespeare himself sometimes premeditate the sheerest bombast! But even with regard to these Letters of Burns, it is but fair to state that he had two excuses. The first was his comparative deficiency in language. Burns, though for most part he writes with singular force and even gracefulness, is not master of English prose, as he is of Scottish verse; not master of it, we mean, in proportion to the depth and vehemence of his matter. These Letters strike us as the effort of a man to express something which he has no organ fit for expressing. But a second and weightier excuse is to be found in the peculiarity of Burns's social rank. His correspondents are often men

whose relation to him he has never accurately ascertained; whom therefore he is either forearming himself against, or else unconsciously flattering, by adopting the style he thinks will please them. At all events, we should remember that these faults, even in his Letters, are not the rule, but the exception. Whenever he writes, as one would ever wish to do, to trusted friends and on real interests, his style becomes simple, vigorous, expressive, sometimes even beautiful. His letters to Mrs. Dunlop are uniformly excellent.

But we return to his Poetry. In addition to its Sincerity, it has another peculiar merit, which indeed is but a mode, or perhaps a means, of the foregoing: this displays itself in his choice of subjects; or rather in his indifference as to subjects, and the power he has of making all subjects interesting. The ordinary poet, like the ordinary man, is forever seeking in external circumstances the help which can be found only in himself. In what is familiar and near at hand, he discerns no form or comeliness: home is not poetical but prosaic; it is in some past, distant, conventional heroic world, that poetry resides; were he there and not here, were he thus and not so, it would be well with him. Hence our innumerable host of rose-colored Novels and iron-mailed Epics, with their locality not on the Earth, but somewhere nearer to the Moon. Hence our Virgins of the Sun, and our Knights of the Cross, malicious Saracens in turbans, and copper-colored Chiefs in wampum, and so many other truculent figures from the heroic times or the heroic climates, who on all hands swarm in our poetry. Peace be with them! But yet, as a great moralist proposed preaching to the men of this century, so would we fain preach to the poets, "a sermon on the duty of staying at home." Let them be sure that heroic ages and heroic climates

can do little for them. That form of life has attraction for us, less because it is better or nobler than our own, than simply because it is different; and even this attraction must be of the most transient sort. For will not our own age, one day, be an ancient one; and have as quaint a costume as the rest; not contrasted with the rest, therefore, but ranked along with them, in respect of quaintness? Does Homer interest us now, because he wrote of what passed beyond his native Greece, and two centuries before he was born; or because he wrote what passed in God's world, and in the heart of man, which is the same after thirty centuries? Let our poets look to this: is their feeling really finer, truer, and their vision deeper than that of other men,—they have nothing to fear, even from the humblest subject; is it not so,—they have nothing to hope, but an ephemeral favor, even from the highest.

The poet, we imagine, can never have far to seek for a subject: the elements of his art are in him, and around him on every hand; for him the Ideal world is not remote from the Actual, but under it and within it: nay, he is a poet, precisely because he can discern it there. Wherever there is a sky above him, and a world around him, the poet is in his place; for here too is man's existence, with its infinite longings and small acquirings; its ever-thwarted, ever-renewed endeavors; its unspeakable aspirations, its fears and hopes that wander through Eternity; and all the mystery of brightness and of gloom that it was ever made of, in any age or climate, since man first began to live. Is there not the fifth act of a Tragedy in every death-bed, though it were a peasant's, and a bed of heath? And are wooings and weddings obsolete, that there can be Comedy no longer? Or are men suddenly grown wise, that Laughter must no longer shake his sides, but be

cheated of his Farce? Man's life and nature is, as it was, and as it will ever be. But the poet must have an eye to read these things, and a heart to understand them; or they come and pass away before him in vain. He is a *vates*, a seer; a gift of vision has been given him. Has life no meanings for him, which another cannot equally decipher; then he is no poet, and Delphi itself will not make him one.

In this respect, Burns, though not perhaps absolutely a great poet, better manifests his capability, better proves the truth of his genius, than if he had by his own strength kept the whole Minerva Press going, to the end of his literary course. He shows himself at least a poet of Nature's own making; and Nature, after all, is still the grand agent in making poets. We often hear of this and the other external condition being requisite for the existence of a poet. Sometimes it is a certain sort of training; he must have studied certain things, studied for instance "the elder dramatists," and so learned a poetic language; as if poetry lay in the tongue, not in the heart. At other times we are told he must be bred in a certain rank, and must be on a confidential footing with the higher classes; because, above all things, he must see the world. As to seeing the world, we apprehend this will cause him little difficulty, if he have but eyesight to see it with. Without eyesight, indeed, the task might be hard. The blind or the purblind man "travels from Dan to Beersheba, and finds it all barren." But happily every poet is born *in* the world; and sees it, with or against his will, every day and every hour he lives. The mysterious workmanship of man's heart, the true light and the inscrutable darkness of man's destiny, reveal themselves not only in capital cities and crowded saloons, but in every hut and hamlet where men have their abode. Nay,

do not the elements of all human virtues and all human vices; the passions at once of a Borgia and of a Luther, lie written, in stronger or fainter lines, in the consciousness of every individual bosom, that has practised honest self-examination? Truly, this same world may be seen in Mossgiel and Tarbolton, if we look well, as clearly as it ever came to light in Crockford's, or the Tuileries itself.

But sometimes still harder requisitions are laid on the poor aspirant to poetry; for it is hinted that he should have *been born* two centuries ago; inasmuch as poetry, about that date, vanished from the earth, and became no longer attainable by men! Such cobweb speculations have, now and then, overhung the field of literature; but they obstruct not the growth of any plant there: the Shakespeare or the Burns, unconsciously and merely as he walks onward, silently brushes them away. Is not every genius an impossibility till he appear? Why do we call him new and original, if *we* saw where his marble was lying, and what fabric he could rear from it? It is not the material but the workman that is wanting. It is not the dark *place* that hinders, but the dim *eye*. A Scottish peasant's life was the meanest and rudest of all lives, till Burns became a poet in it, and a poet of it; found it a *man's* life, and therefore significant to men. A thousand battle-fields remain unsung; but the *Wounded Hare* has not perished without its memorial; a balm of mercy yet breathes on us from its dumb agonies, because a poet was there. Our *Halloween* had passed and repassed, in rude awe and laughter, since the era of the Druids; but no Theocritus, till Burns, discerned in it the materials of a Scottish Idyl: neither was the *Holy Fair* any *Council of Trent* or Roman *Jubilee;* but nevertheless, *Superstition* and *Hypocrisy* and *Fun* having been propitious to him, in this man's hand it became a poem, instinct with satire and genuine

comic life. Let but the true poet be given us, we repeat it, place him where and how you will, and true poetry will not be wanting.

Independently of the essential gift of poetic feeling, as we have now attempted to describe it, a certain rugged sterling worth pervades whatever Burns has written; a virtue, as of green fields and mountain breezes, dwells in his poetry; it is redolent of natural life and hardy natural men. There is a decisive strength in him, and yet a sweet native gracefulness: he is tender, he is vehement, yet without constraint or too visible effort; he melts the heart, or inflames it, with a power which seems habitual and familiar to him. We see that in this man there was the gentleness, the trembling pity of a woman,with the deep earnestness, the force and passionate ardor of a hero. Tears lie in him, and consuming fire; as lightning lurks in the drops of the summer cloud. He has a resonance in his bosom for every note of human feeling; the high and the low, the sad, the ludicrous, the joyful, are welcome in their turns to his "lightly-moved and all-conceiving spirit." And observe with what a fierce prompt force he grasps his subject, be it what it may! How he fixes, as it were, the full image of the matter in his eye; full and clear in every lineament; and catches the real type and essence of it, amid a thousand accidents and superficial circumstances, no one of which misleads him! Is it of reason; some truth to be discovered? No sophistry, no vain surface-logic detains him; quick, resolute, unerring, he pierces through into the marrow of the question; and speaks his verdict with an emphasis that cannot be forgotten. Is it of description; some visual object to be represented? No poet of any age or nation is more graphic than Burns: the characteristic features disclose themselves to him at a glance; three lines from his hand,

and we have a likeness. And, in that rough dialect, in that rude, often awkward meter, so clear and definite a likeness! It seems a draughtsman working with a burnt stick; and yet the burin of a Retzsch is not more expressive or exact.

Of this last excellence, the plainest and most comprehensive of all, being indeed the root and foundation of *every* sort of talent, poetical or intellectual, we could produce innumerable instances from the writings of Burns. Take these glimpses of a snow-storm from his *Winter Night* (the italics are ours):

> When biting Boreas, fell and doure,
> *Sharp shivers* thro' the leafless bow'r,
> And Phœbus *gies a short-liv'd glow'r*
> *Far south the lift,*
> *Dim-dark'ning thro' the flaky show'r*
> *Or whirling drift:*
>
> Ae night the storm the steeples rock'd,
> Poor labor sweet in sleep was lock'd,
> While burns *wi' snawy wreaths upchok'd*
> *Wild-eddying swirl,*
> Or thro' the mining outlet bock'd
> Down headlong hurl.

Are there not "descriptive touches" here? The describer *saw* this thing; the essential feature and true likeness of every circumstance in it; saw, and not with the eye only. "Poor labor locked in sweet sleep"; the dead stillness of man, unconscious, vanquished, yet not unprotected, while such strife of the material elements rages, and seems to reign supreme in loneliness: his is of the heart as well as of the eye!—Look also at this image of a thaw, and prophesied fall of the *Auld Brig:*

> When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains
> Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;

When from the hills where springs the brawling Coil,—
Or stately Lugar's *mossy* fountains *boil*,
Or where the Greenock winds his *moorland* course,
Or haunted Garpal draws his feeble source,
Arous'd by blust'ring winds an' *spotting* thowes,
In mony a torrent down his snaw-broo rowes;
While crashing ice, borne on the roaring speat,
Sweeps dams an' mills an' brigs a' to the gate;
And from Glenbuck down to the Rattonkey,
Auld Ayr is just one lengthen'd *tumbling* sea;
Then down ye'll hurl (Deil nor ye never rise!)
And *dash the gumlie jaups up to the pouring skies.*

The last line is in itself a Poussin-picture of that Deluge! The welkin has, as it were, bent down with its weight; the "gumlie jaups" and the "pouring skies" are mingled together; it is a world of rain and ruin.—In respect of mere clearness and minute fidelity, the *Farmer's* commendation of his *Auld Mare*, in plow or in cart, may vie with Homer's Smithy of the Cyclops, or yoking of Priam's Chariot. Nor have we forgotten stout *Burn-the-wind* and his brawny customers, inspired by *Scotch Drink:* but it is needless to multiply examples. One other trait of a much finer sort we select from multitudes of such among his *Songs*. It gives, in a single line, to the saddest feeling the saddest environment and local habitation:

The pale Moon is setting beyond the white wave,
And time is setting wi' me, O;
Farewell, false friends! false lover, farewell!
I'll nae mair trouble them nor thee, O.

This clearness of sight we have called the foundation of all talent; for in fact, unless we *see* our object, how shall we know how to place or prize it, in our understanding, our imagination, our affections? Yet it is not in it-

self, perhaps, a very high excellence; but capable of being united indifferently with the strongest, or with ordinary power. Homer surpasses all men in this quality: but strangely enough, at no great distance below him are Richardson and Defoe. It belongs, in truth, to what is called a lively mind; and gives no sure indication of the higher endowments that may exist along with it. In all the three cases we have mentioned, it is combined with great garrulity; their descriptions are detailed, ample and lovingly exact; Homer's fire burst through, from time to time, as if by accident; but Defoe and Richardson have no fire. Burns, again, is not more distinguished by the clearness than by the impetuous force of his conceptions. Of the strength, the piercing emphasis with which he thought, his emphasis of expression may give a humble but the readiest proof. Who ever uttered sharper sayings than his; words more memorable, now by their burning vehemence, now by their cool vigor and laconic pith? A single phrase depicts a whole subject, a whole scene. We hear of "a gentlemen that derived his patent of nobility direct from Almighty God." Our Scottish forefathers in the battle-field struggled forward "*red-wat-shod*": in this one word a full vision of horror and carnage, perhaps too frightfully accurate for Art!

In fact, one of the leading features in the mind of Burns is this vigor of his strictly intellectual perceptions. A resolute force is ever visible in his judgments, and in his feelings and volitions. Professor Stewart says of him, with some surprise: "All faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his con-

versation I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities." But this, if we mistake not, is at all times the very essence of a truly poetical endowment. Poetry, except in such cases as that of Keats, where the whole consists in a weak-eyed maudlin sensibility, and a certain vague random tunefulness of nature, is no separate faculty, no organ which can be superadded to the rest, or disjoined from them; but rather the result of their general harmony and completion. The feelings, the gifts that exist in the Poet are those that exist, with more or less development, in every human soul: the imagination, which shudders at the Hell of Dante, is the same faculty, weaker in degree, which called that picture into being. How does the Poet speak to men, with power, but by being still more a man than they? Shakespeare, it has been well observed, in the planning and completing of his tragedies, has shown an Understanding, were it nothing more, which might have governed states, or indited a *Novum Organum*. What Burns's force of understanding may have been, we have less means of judging: it had to dwell among the humblest objects; never saw Philosophy; never rose, except by natural effort and for short intervals, into the region of great ideas. Nevertheless, sufficient indication, if no proof sufficient, remains for us in his works: we discern the brawny movements of a gigantic though untutored strength; and can understand how, in conversation, his quick sure insight into men and things may, as much as aught else about him, have amazed the best thinkers of his time and country.

But, unless we mistake, the intellectual gift of Burns is fine as well as strong. The more delicate relations of things could not well have escaped his eye, for they were intimately present to his heart. The logic of the senate

and the forum is indispensable, but not all-sufficient; nay, perhaps the highest Truth is that which will the most certainly elude it. For this logic works by words, and "the highest," it has been said, "cannot be expressed in words." We are not without tokens of an openness for this higher truth also, of a keen though uncultivated sense for it, having existed in Burns. Mr Stewart, it will be remembered, "wonders," in the passage above quoted, that Burns had formed some distinct conception of the "doctrine of association." We rather think that far subtler things than the doctrine of association had from of old been familiar to him. Here for instance:

"We know nothing," thus writes he, "or next to nothing, of the structure of our souls, so we cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favorite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the harebell, the foxglove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer moon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of gray plover in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident; or do those workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities: a God that made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave."

Force and fineness of understanding are often spoken of as something different from general force and fineness of nature, as something partly independent of them. The necessities of language so require it; but in truth these qualities are not distinct and independent: except in special cases, and from special causes, they ever go to-

gether. A man of strong understanding is generally a man of strong character; neither is delicacy in the one kind often divided from delicacy in the other. No one, at all events, is ignorant that in the Poetry of Burns keenness of insight keeps pace with keenness of feeling; that his *light* is not more pervading than his *warmth*. He is a man of the most impassioned temper; with passions not strong only, but noble, and of the sort in which great virtues and great poems take their rise. It is reverence, it is love towards all Nature that inspires him, that opens his eyes to its beauty, and makes heart and voice eloquent in its praise. There is a true old saying, that "Love furthers knowledge": but above all, it is the living essence of that knowledge which makes poets; the first principle of its existence, increase, activity. Of Burns's fervid affection, his generous all-embracing Love, we have spoken already, as of the grand distinction of his nature, seen equally in word and deed, in his Life and in his Writings. It were easy to multiply examples. Not man only, but all that environs man in the material and moral universe, is lovely in his sight: "the hoary hawthorn," the "troop of gray plover," the "solitary curlew," all are dear to him; all live in this Earth along with him, and to all he is knit as in mysterious brotherhood. How touching is it, for instance, that, amidst the gloom of personal misery, brooding over the wintry desolation without him and within him, he thinks of the "ourie cattle" and "silly sheep," and their sufferings in the pitiless storm!

> I thought me on the ourie cattle,
> Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
> O' wintry war,
> Or thro' the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle,
> Beneath a scaur.

Ilk happing bird, wee helpless thing,
That in the merry months o' spring
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Where wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e?

The tenant of the mean hut, with its "ragged roof and chinky wall," has a heart to pity even these! This is worth several homilies on Mercy; for it is the voice of Mercy herself. Burns, indeed, lives in sympathy; his soul rushes forth into all realms of being; nothing that has existence can be indifferent to him. The very Devil he cannot hate with right orthodoxy:

But fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben;
O, wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
Ye aiblins might,—I dinna ken,—
Still hae a stake;
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
Ev'n for your sake!

"*He* is the father of curses and lies," said Dr. Slop; "and is cursed and damned already."—"I am sorry for it," quoth my uncle Toby!—a Poet without Love were a physical and metaphysical impossibility.

But has it not been said, in contradiction to this principle, that "Indignation makes verses"? It has been so said, and is true enough: but the contradiction is apparent, not real. The Indignation which makes verses is, properly speaking, an inverted Love; the love of some right, some worth, some goodness, belonging to ourselves or others, which has been injured, and which this tempestuous feeling issues forth to defend and avenge. No selfish fury of heart, existing there as a primary feeling, and without its opposite, ever produced much Poetry: otherwise, we suppose, the Tiger were the most musical of

all our choristers. Johnson said he loved a good hater; by which he must have meant, not so much one that hated violently, as one that hated wisely; hated baseness from love of nobleness. However, in spite of Johnson's paradox, tolerable enough for once in speech, but which need not have been so often adopted in print since then, we rather believe that good men deal sparingly in hatred, either wise or unwise: nay, that a "good" hater is still a desideratum in this world. The Devil, at least, who passes for the chief and best of that class, is said to be nowise an amiable character.

Of the verses which Indignation makes, Burns has also given us specimens: and among the best that were ever given. Who will forget his *Dweller in yon Dungeon dark;* a piece that might have been chanted by the Furies of Æschylus? The secrets of the Infernal Pit are laid bare; a boundless baleful "darkness visible"; and streaks of hell-fire quivering madly in its black haggard bosom!

> Dweller in yon dungeon dark,
> Hangman of creation, mark!
> Who in widow-weeds appears,
> Laden with unhonored years,
> Noosing with care a bursting purse,
> Baited with many a deadly curse!

Why should we speak of *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,* since all know of it, from the king to the meanest of his subjects? This dithyrambic was composed on horseback; in riding in the middle of tempests, over the wildest Galloway moor, in company with a Mr. Syme, who, observing the poet's looks, forbore to speak,—judiciously enough, for a man composing *Bruce's Address* might be unsafe to trifle with. Doubtless his stern hymn was singing itself, as he formed it, through the soul of Burns: but to the external ear, it should be sung with the throat

of the whirlwind. So long as there is warm blood in the heart of Scotchman or man, it will move in fierce thrills under this war-ode; the best, we believe, that was ever written by any pen.

Another wild stormful Song, that dwells in our ear and mind with a strange tenacity, is *Macpherson's Farewell.* Perhaps there is something in the tradition itself that co-operates. For was not this grim Celt, this shaggy North-land Cacus, that "lived a life of sturt and strife, and died by treacherie,"—was not he too one of the Nimrods and Napoleons of the earth, in the arena of his own remote misty glens, for want of a clearer and wider one? Nay, was there not a touch of grace given him? A fiber of love and softness, of poetry itself, must have lived in his savage heart: for he composed that air the night before his execution; on the wings of that poor melody his better soul would soar away above oblivion, pain, and all the ignominy and despair, which, like an avalanche, was hurling him to the abyss! Here also, as at Thebes, and in Pelops' line, was material Fate matched against man's Free-will; matched in bitterest though obscure duel; and the ethereal soul sank not, even in its blindness, without a cry which has survived it. But who, except Burns, could have given words to such a soul; words that we never listen to without a strange half-barbarous, half-poetic fellow-feeling?

Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he;
He play'd a spring, and danced it round,
Below the gallows-tree.

Under a lighter disguise, the same principle of Love, which we have recognized as the great characteristic of Burns, and of all true poets, occasionally manifests itself in the shape of Humor. Everywhere, indeed, in his sunny

moods, a full buoyant flood of mirth rolls through the mind of Burns; he rises to the high, and stoops to the low, and is brother and playmate to all Nature. We speak not of his bold and often irresistible faculty of caricature; for this is Drollery rather than Humor: but a much tenderer sportfulness dwells in him; and comes forth here and there, in evanescent and beautiful touches; as in his *Address to the Mouse*, or the *Farmer's Mare*, or in his *Elegy on poor Mailie*, which last may be reckoned his happiest effort of this kind. In these pieces there are traits of a Humor as fine as that of Sterne; yet altogether different, original, peculiar,—the Humor of Burns.

Of the tenderness, the playful pathos, and many other kindred qualities of Burns's Poetry, much more might be said; but now, with these poor outlines of a sketch, we must prepare to quit this part of our subject. To speak of his individual Writings, adequately and with any detail, would lead us far beyond our limits. As already hinted, we can look on but few of these pieces as, in strict critical language, deserving the name of Poems: they are rimed eloquence, rimed pathos, rimed sense; yet seldom essentially melodious, aërial, poetical. *Tam o' Shanter* itself, which enjoys so high a favor, does not appear to us at all decisively to come under this last category. It is not so much a poem, as a piece of sparkling rhetoric; the heart and body of the story still lies hard and dead. He has not gone back, much less carried us back, into that dark, earnest, wondering age, when the tradition was believed, and when it took its rise; he does not attempt, by any new-modeling of his supernatural ware, to strike anew that deep mysterious chord of human nature, which once responded to such things; and which lives in us too, and will forever live, though silent now, or vibrating with

far other notes, and to far different issues. Our German readers will understand us, when we say, that he is not the Tieck but the Musäus of this tale. Externally it is all green and living; yet look closer, it is no firm growth, but only ivy on a rock. The piece does not properly cohere: the strange chasm which yawns in our incredulous imaginations between the Ayr public-house and the gate of Tophet, is nowhere bridged over, nay, the idea of such a bridge is laughed at; and thus the Tragedy of the adventure becomes a mere drunken phantasmagoria, or many-colored spectrum painted on ale-vapors, and the Farce alone has any reality. We do not say that Burns should have made much more of this tradition; we rather think that, for strictly poetical purposes, not much *was* to be made of it. Neither are we blind to the deep, varied, genial power displayed in what he has actually accomplished; but we find far more "Shakespearean" qualities, as these of *Tam o' Shanter* have been fondly named, in many of his other pieces; nay, we incline to believe that this latter might have been written, all but quite as well, by a man who, in place of genius, had only possessed talent.

Perhaps we may venture to say, that the most strictly poetical of all his "poems" is one which does not appear in Currie's Edition; but has been often printed before and since, under the humble title of *The Jolly Beggars*. The subject truly is among the lowest in nature; but it only the more shows our Poet's gift in raising it into the domain of Art. To our minds, this piece seems thoroughly compacted; melted together, refined; and poured forth in one flood of true *liquid* harmony. It is light, airy, soft of movement; yet sharp and precise in its details; every face is a portrait: that *raucle carlin*, that *wee Apollo*, that *Son of Mars*, are Scottish, yet ideal; the

scene is at once a dream, and the very Ragcastle of "Poosie Nansie." Farther, it seems in a considerable degree complete, a real self-supporting Whole, which is the highest merit in a poem. The blanket of the Night is drawn asunder for a moment; in full, ruddy, flaming light, these rough tatterdemalions are seen in their boisterous revel; for the strong pulse of Life vindicates its right to gladness even here; and when the curtain closes, we prolong the action, without effort; the next day as the last, our *Caird* and our *Balladmonger* are singing and soldiering; their "brats and callets" are hawking, begging, cheating; and some other night, in new combinations, they will wring from Fate another hour of wassail and good cheer. Apart from the universal sympathy with man which this again bespeaks in Burns, a genuine inspiration and no inconsiderable technical talent are manifested here. There is the fidelity, humor, warm life, and accurate painting and grouping of some Teniers, for whom hostlers and carousing peasants are not without significance. It would be strange, doubtless, to call this the best of Burns's writings: we mean to say only, that it seems to us the most perfect of its kind, as a piece of poetical composition, strictly so called. In the *Beggar's Opera*, in the *Beggar's Bush*, as other critics have already remarked, there is nothing which, in real poetic vigor, equals this *Cantata;* nothing, as we think, which comes within many degrees of it.

But by far the most finished, complete and truly inspired pieces of Burns are, without dispute, to be found among his *Songs.* It is here that, although through a small aperture, his light shines with least obstruction; in its highest beauty and pure sunny clearness. The reason may be, that Song is a brief simple species of com-

position; and requires nothing so much for its perfection as genuine poetic feeling, genuine music of heart. Yet the Song has its rules equally with the Tragedy; rules which in most cases are poorly fulfilled, in many cases are not so much as felt. We might write a long essay on the Songs of Burns; which we reckon by far the best that Britain has yet produced: for indeed, since the era of Queen Elizabeth, we know not that, by any other hand, aught truly worth attention has been accomplished in this department. True, we have songs enough "by persons of quality"; we have tawdry, hollow, wine-bred madrigals; many a rimed speech "in the flowing and watery vein of Ossorius the Portugal Bishop," rich in sonorous words, and, for moral, dashed perhaps with some tint of a sentimental sensuality; all which many persons cease not from endeavoring to sing; though for most part, we fear, the music is but from the throat outwards, or at best from some region far enough short of the *Soul;* not in which, but in a certain inane Limbo of the Fancy, or even in some vaporous debatable-land on the outskirts of the Nervous System, most of such madrigals and rimed speeches seem to have originated.

With the Songs of Burns we must not name these things. Independently of the clear, manly, heartfelt sentiment that ever pervades *his* poetry, his Songs are honest in another point of view: in form, as well as in spirit. They do not *affect* to be set to music, but they actually and in themselves are music; they have received their life, and fashioned themselves together, in the medium of Harmony, as Venus rose from the bosom of the sea. The story, the feeling, is not detailed, but suggested; not *said,* or spouted, in rhetorical completeness and coherence; but *sung,* in fitful gushes, in glowing hints, in fantastic breaks, in *warblings* not of the voice only, but of the

whole mind. We consider this to be the essence of a song; and that no songs since the little careless catches, and as it were drops of song, which Shakespeare has here and there sprinkled over his plays, fulfil this condition in nearly the same degree as most of Burns's do. Such grace and truth of external movement, too, presupposes in general a corresponding force and truth of sentiment and inward meaning. The Songs of Burns are not more perfect in the former quality than in the latter. With what tenderness he sings, yet with what vehemence and entireness! There is a piercing wail in his sorrow, the purest rapture in his joy; he burns with the sternest ire, or laughs with the loudest or sliest mirth; and yet he is sweet and soft, "sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet, and soft as their parting tear." If we farther take into account the immense variety of his subjects; how, from the loud flowing revel in *Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut*, to the still, rapt enthusiasm of sadness for *Mary in Heaven;* from the glad kind greeting of *Auld Lang Syne*, or the comic archness of *Duncan Gray*, to the fire-eyed fury of *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled*, he has found a tone and words for every mood of man's heart,—it will seem a small praise if we rank him as the first of all our Song-writers; for we know not where to find one worthy of being second to him.

It is on his Songs, as we believe, that Burns's chief influence as an author will ultimately be found to depend: nor, if our Fletcher's aphorism is true, shall we account this a small influence. "Let me make the songs of a people," said he, "and you shall make its laws." Surely, if ever any Poet might have equaled himself with Legislators on this ground, it was Burns. His Songs are already part of the mother-tongue, not of Scotland only but of Britain, and of the millions that in all ends of the earth speak a British language. In hut and hall, as the heart

unfolds itself in many-colored joy and woe of existence, the *name*, the *voice* of that joy and that woe, is the name and voice which Burns has given them. Strictly speaking, perhaps no British man has so deeply affected the thoughts and feelings of so many men, as this solitary and altogether private individual, with means apparently the humblest.

In another point of view, moreover, we incline to think that Burns's influence may have been considerable: we mean, as exerted specially on the Literature of his country, at least on the Literature of Scotland. Among the great changes which British, particularly Scottish literature, has undergone since that period, one of the greatest will be found to consist in its remarkable increase of nationality. Even the English writers, most popular in Burns's time, were little distinguished for their literary patriotism, in this its best sense. A certain attenuated cosmopolitanism had, in good measure, taken place of the old insular home-feeling; literature was, as it were, without any local environment; was not nourished by the affections which spring from a native soil. Our Grays and Glovers seemed to write almost as if *in vacuo;* the thing written bears no mark of place; it is not written so much for Englishmen, as for men; or rather, which is the inevitable result of this, for certain Generalizations which philosophy termed men. Goldsmith is an exception: not so Johnson; the scene of his *Rambler* is little more English than that of his *Rasselas*.

But if such was, in some degree, the case with England, it was, in the highest degree, the case with Scotland. In fact, our Scottish literature had, at that period, a very singular aspect; unexampled, so far as we know, except perhaps at Geneva, where the same state of matters appears still to continue. For a long period after Scotland became British, we had no literature: at the date when

Addison and Steele were writing their *Spectators*, our good John Boston was writing, with the noblest intent, but alike in defiance of grammar and philosophy, his *Fourfold State of Man*. Then came the schisms in our National Church, and fiercer schisms in our Body Politic; Theologic ink, and Jacobite blood, with gall enough in both cases, seemed to have blotted out the intellect of the country: however, it was only obscured, not obliterated. Lord Kames made nearly the first attempt at writing English; and ere long Hume, Robertson, Smith, and a whole host of followers, attracted hither the eyes of all Europe. And yet in this brilliant resuscitation of our "fervid genius," there was nothing truly Scottish, nothing indigenous; except, perhaps, the natural impetuosity of intellect, which we sometimes claim, and are sometimes upbraided with, as a characteristic of our nation. It is curious to remark that Scotland, so full of writers, had no Scottish culture, nor indeed any English; our culture was almost exclusively French. It was by studying Racine and Voltaire, Batteux and Boileau, that Kames had trained himself to be a critic and philosopher; it was the light of Montesquieu and Mably that guided Robertson in his political speculations; Quesnay's lamp that kindled the lamp of Adam Smith. Hume was too rich a man to borrow; and perhaps he reacted on the French more than he was acted on by them: but neither had he aught to do with Scotland; Edinburgh, equally with La Flèche, was but the lodging and laboratory, in which he not so much morally *lived*, as metaphysically *investigated*. Never, perhaps, was there a class of writers so clear and well ordered, yet so totally destitute, to all appearance, of any patriotic affection, nay, of any human affection whatever. The French wits of the period were as unpatriotic: but their general deficiency in moral principle, not to say their

avowed sensuality and unbelief in all virtue, strictly so-called, render this accountable enough. We hope there is a patriotism founded on something better than prejudice; that our country may be dear to us, without injury to our philosophy; that in loving and justly prizing all other lands, we may prize justly, and yet love before all others, our own stern Motherland, and the venerable Structure of social and moral Life, which Mind has through long ages been building up for us there. Surely there is nourishment for the better part of man's heart in all this: surely the roots, that have fixed themselves in the very core of man's being, may be so cultivated as to grow up not into briers, but into roses, in the field of his life! Our Scottish sages have no such propensities: the field of their life shows neither briers nor roses; but only a flat, continuous thrashing-floor for Logic, whereon all questions, from the "Doctrine of Rent" to the "Natural History of Religion," are thrashed and sifted with the same mechanical impartiality!

With Sir Walter Scott at the head of our literature, it cannot be denied that much of this evil is past, or rapidly passing away: our chief literary men, whatever other faults they may have, no longer live among us like a French Colony, or some knot of Propaganda Missionaries; but like natural-born subjects of the soil, partaking and sympathizing in all our attachments, humors, and habits. Our literature no longer grows in water but in mold, and with the true racy virtues of the soil and climate. How much of this change may be due to Burns, or to any other individual, it might be difficult to estimate. Direct literary imitation of Burns was not to be looked for. But his example, in the fearless adoption of domestic subjects, could not but operate from afar; and certainly in no heart did the love of country ever burn with a warmer

glow than in that of Burns: "a tide of Scottish prejudice," as he modestly calls this deep and generous feeling, "had been poured along his veins; and he felt that it would boil there till the flood-gates shut in eternal rest." It seemed to him, as if *he* could do so little for his country, and yet would so gladly have done all. One small province stood open for him,—that of Scottish Song; and how eagerly he entered on it, how devotedly he labored there! In his toilsome journeyings, this object never quits him; it is the little happy valley of his careworn heart. In the gloom of his own affliction, he eagerly searches after some lonely brother of the muse, and rejoices to snatch one other name from the oblivion that was covering it! These were early feelings, and they abode with him to the end:

> . . . a wish (I mind its pow'r),
> A wish, that to my latest hour
> Will strongly heave my breast,—
> That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
> Some usefu' plan or book could make,
> Or sing a sang at least.
>
> The rough burr-thistle spreading wide
> Amang the bearded bear,
> I turn'd my weeder-clips aside,
> And spar'd the symbol dear.

But to leave the mere literary character of Burns, which has already detained us too long. Far more interesting than any of his written works, as it appears to us, are his acted ones: the Life he willed and was fated to lead among his fellow-men. These Poems are but like little rimed fragments scattered here and there in the grand unrimed Romance of his earthly existence; and it is only when intercalated in this at their proper places,

that they attain their full measure of significance. And this, too, alas, was but a fragment! The plan of a mighty edifice had been sketched; some columns, porticos, firm masses of building, stand completed; the rest more or less clearly indicated; with many a far-stretching tendency, which only studious and friendly eyes can now trace towards the purposed termination. For the work is broken off in the middle, almost in the beginning; and rises among us, beautiful and sad, at once unfinished and a ruin! If charitable judgment was necessary in estimating his Poems, and Justice required that the aim and the manifest power to fulfil it must often be accepted for the fulfilment; much more is this the case in regard to his Life, the sum and result of all his endeavors, where his difficulties came upon him not in detail only, but in mass; and so much has been left unaccomplished, nay, was mistaken, and altogether marred.

Properly speaking, there is but one era in the life of Burns, and that the earliest. We have not youth and manhood, but only youth: for, to the end, we discern no decisive change in the complexion of his character; in his thirty-seventh year, he is still, as it were in youth. With all that resoluteness of judgment, that penetrating insight, and singular maturity of intellectual power, exhibited in his writings, he never attains to any clearness regarding himself; to the last, he never ascertains his peculiar aim, even with such distinctness as is common among ordinary men; and therefore never can pursue it with that singleness of will, which insures success and some contentment to such men. To the last, he wavers between two purposes: glorying in his talent, like a true poet, he yet cannot consent to make this his chief and sole glory, and to follow it as the one thing needful, through poverty or riches, through good or evil report. Another far meaner am-

bition still cleaves to him; he must dream and struggle about a certain "Rock of Independence"; which, natural and even admirable as it might be, was still but a warring with the world, on the comparatively insignificant ground of his being more completely or less completely supplied with money than others; of his standing at a higher or at a lower altitude in a general estimation than others. For the world still appears to him, as to the young, in borrowed colors: he expects from it what it cannot give to any man; seeks for contentment, not within himself, in action and wise effort, but from without, in the kindness of circumstances, in love, friendship, honor, pecuniary ease. He would be happy, not actively and in himself, but passively and from some ideal cornucopia of Enjoyments, not earned by his own labor, but showered on him by the beneficence of Destiny. Thus, like a young man, he cannot gird himself up for any worthy well-calculated goal, but swerves to and fro, between passionate hope and remorseful disappointment: rushing onwards with a deep tempestuous force, he surmounts or breaks asunder many a barrier; travels, nay, advances far, but advancing only under uncertain guidance, is ever and anon turned from his path; and to the last cannot reach the only true happiness of a man, that of clear decided Activity in the sphere for which, by nature and circumstances, he has been fitted and appointed.

We do not say these things in dispraise of Burns; nay, perhaps, they but interest us the more in his favor. This blessing is not given soonest to the best; but rather, it is often the greatest minds that are latest in obtaining it; for where most is to be developed, most time may be required to develop it. A complex condition had been assigned him from without; as complex a condition from within: no "pre-established harmony" existed between

the clay soil of Mossgiel and the empyrean soul of Robert Burns; it was not wonderful that the adjustment between them should have been long postponed, and his arm long cumbered, and his sight confused, in so vast and discordant an economy as he had been appointed steward over. Byron was, at his death, but a year younger than Burns; and through life, as it might have appeared, far more simply situated: yet in him too we can trace no such adjustment, no such moral manhood; but at best, and only a little before his end, the beginning of what seemed such.

By much the most striking incident in Burns's Life is his journey to Edinburgh; but perhaps a still more important one is his residence at Irvine, so early as in his twenty-third year. Hitherto his life had been poor and toilworn; but otherwise not ungenial, and, with all its distresses, by no means unhappy. In his parentage, deducting outward circumstances, he had every reason to reckon himself fortunate. His father was a man of thoughtful, intense, earnest character, as the best of our peasants are; valuing knowledge, possessing some, and what is far better and rarer, open-minded for more: a man with a keen insight and devout heart; reverent towards God, friendly therefore at once, and fearless towards all that God has made: in one word, though but a hardhanded peasant, a complete and fully unfolded *Man*. Such a father is seldom found in any rank in society; and was worth descending far in society to seek. Unfortunately, he was very poor; had he been even a little richer, almost never so little, the whole might have issued far otherwise. Mighty events turn on a straw; the crossing of a brook decides the conquest of the world. Had this William Burns's small seven acres of nursery-ground anywise prospered, the boy Robert had been sent to school; had struggled forward, as so many weaker men do, to some univer-

sity; come forth not as a rustic wonder, but as a regular well-trained intellectual workman, and changed the whole course of British Literature,—for it lay in him to have done this! But the nursery did not prosper; poverty sank his whole family below the help of even our cheap school system: Burns remained a hard-worked plowboy, and British literature took its own course. Nevertheless, even in this rugged scene there is much to nourish him. If he drudges, it is with his brother, and for his father and mother, whom he loves, and would fain shield from want. Wisdom is not banished from their poor hearth, nor the balm of natural feeling: the solemn words, *Let us worship God*, are heard there from a "priest-like father"; if threatenings of unjust men throw mother and children into tears, these are tears not of grief only, but of holiest affection; every heart in that humble group feels itself the closer knit to every other; in their hard warfare they are there together, a "little band of brethren." Neither are such tears, and the deep beauty that dwells in them, their only portion. Light visits the hearts as it does the eyes of all living: there is a force, too, in this youth, that enables him to trample on misfortune; nay, to bind it under his feet to make him sport. For a bold, warm, buoyant humor of character has been given him; and so the thick-coming shapes of evil are welcomed with a gay, friendly irony, and in their closest pressure he bates no jot of heart or hope. Vague yearnings of ambition fail not, as he grows up; dreamy fancies hang like cloud-cities around him; the curtain of Existence is slowly rising, in many-colored splendor and gloom: and the auroral light of first love is gilding his horizon, and the music of song is on his path; and so he walks

> . . . . in glory and in joy,
> Behind his plow, upon the mountain side.

We ourselves know, from the best evidence, that up to this date Burns was happy; nay, that he was the gayest, brightest, most fantastic, fascinating being to be found in the world; more so even than he ever afterwards appeared. But now, at this early age, he quits the paternal roof; goes forth into looser, louder, more exciting society; and becomes initiated in those dissipations, those vices, which a certain class of philosophers have asserted to be a natural preparative for entering on active life; a kind of mud-bath, in which the youth is, as it were, necessitated to steep, and, we suppose, cleanse himself, before the real toga of Manhood can be laid on him. We shall not dispute much with this class of philosophers; we hope they are mistaken: for Sin and Remorse so easily beset us at all stages of life, and are always such indifferent company, that it seems hard we should, at any stage, be forced and fated not only to meet but to yield to them, and even serve for a term in their leprous armada. We hope it is not so. Clear we are, at all events, it cannot be the training one receives in this Devil's service, but only our determining to desert from it, that fits us for true manly Action. We become men, not after we have been dissipated, and disappointed in the chase of false pleasure; but after we have ascertained, in any way, what impassable barriers hem us in through this life; how mad it is to hope for contentment to our infinite soul from the *gifts* of this extremely finite world; that a man must be sufficient for himself; and that for suffering and enduring there is no remedy but striving and doing. Manhood begins when we have in any way made truce with Necessity; begins even when we have surrendered to Necessity, as the most part only do; but begins joyfully and hopefully only when we have reconciled ourselves to Necessity; and thus, in reality, triumphed over it, and felt that in Necessity we are free.

Surely, such lessons as this last, which, in one shape or other, is the grand lesson for every mortal man, are better learned from the lips of a devout mother, in the looks and actions of a devout father, while the heart is yet soft and pliant, than in collision with the sharp adamant of Fate, attracting us to shipwreck us, when the heart is grown hard, and may be broken before it will become contrite. Had Burns continued to learn this, as he was already learning it, in his father's cottage, he would have learned it fully, which he never did; and been saved many a lasting aberration, many a bitter hour and year of remorseful sorrow.

It seems to us another circumstance of fatal import in Burns's history, that at this time too he became involved in the religious quarrels of his district; that he was enlisted and feasted, as the fighting man of the New-Light Priesthood, in their highly unprofitable warfare. At the tables of these free-minded clergy he learned much more than was needful for him. Such liberal ridicule of fanaticism awakened in his mind scruples about Religion itself; and a whole world of Doubts, which it required quite another set of conjurors than these men to exorcise. We do not say that such an intellect as his could have escaped similar doubts at some period of his history; or even that he could, at a later period, have come through them altogether victorious and unharmed: but it seems peculiarly unfortunate that this time, above all others, should have been fixed for the encounter. For now, with principles assailed by evil example from without, by "passions raging like demons" from within, he had little need of skeptical misgivings to whisper treason in the heat of the battle, or to cut off his retreat if he were already defeated. He loses his feeling of innocence; his mind is at variance with itself; the old divinity no longer

presides there; but wild Desires and wild Repentance alternately oppress him. Ere long, too, he has committed himself before the world; his character for sobriety, dear to a Scottish peasant as few corrupted worldlings can even conceive, is destroyed in the eyes of men; and his only refuge consists in trying to disbelieve his guiltiness, and is but a refuge of lies. The blackest desperation now gathers over him, broken only by red lightnings of remorse. The whole fabric of his life is blasted asunder; for now not only his character, but his personal liberty, is to be lost; men and Fortune are leagued for his hurt; "hungry Ruin has him in the wind." He sees no escape but the saddest of all: exiled from his loved country, to a country in every sense inhospitable and abhorrent to him. While the "gloomy night is gathering fast," in mental storm and solitude, as well as in physical, he sings his wild farewell to Scotland:

> Farewell, my friends; farewell, my foes!
> My peace with these, my love with those:
> The bursting tears my heart declare;
> Farewell, my bonie banks of Ayr!

Light breaks suddenly in on him in floods; but still a false transitory light, and no real sunshine. He is invited to Edinburgh; hastens thither with anticipating heart; is welcomed as in a triumph, and with universal blandishment and acclamation; whatever is wisest, whatever is greatest or loveliest there, gathers round him, to gaze on his face, to show him honor, sympathy, affection. Burns's appearance among the sages and nobles of Edinburgh must be regarded as one of the most singular phenomena in modern Literature; almost like the appearance of some Napoleon among the crowned sovereigns of modern Politics. For it is nowise as "a mockery king," set there

by favor, transiently and for a purpose, that he will let himself be treated; still less is he a mad Rienzi, whose sudden elevation turns his too weak head: but he stands there on his own basis; cool, unastonished, holding his equal rank from Nature herself; putting forth no claim which there is not strength *in* him, as well as about him, to vindicate. Mr. Lockhart has some forcible observations on this point:

"It needs no effort of imagination," says he, "to conceive what the sensations of an isolated set of scholars (almost all either clergymen or professors) must have been in the presence of this big-boned, black-browed, brawny stranger, with his great flashing eyes, who, having forced his way among them from the plow-tail at a single stride, manifested in the whole strain of his bearing and conversation a most thorough conviction, that in the society of the most eminent men of his nation he was exactly where he was entitled to be; hardly deigned to flatter them by exhibiting even an occasional symptom of being flattered by their notice; by turns calmly measured himself against the most cultivated understandings of his time in discussion; overpowered the *bon-mots* of the most celebrated convivialists by broad floods of merriment, impregnated with all the burning life of genius; astounded bosoms habitually enveloped in the thrice-piled folds of social reserve, by compelling them to tremble,—nay, to tremble visibly,—beneath the fearless touch of natural pathos; and all this without indicating the smallest willingness to be ranked among those professional ministers of excitement, who are content to be paid in money and smiles for doing what the spectators and auditors would be ashamed of doing in their own persons, even if they had the power of doing it; and last, probably worst of all, who was known to be in the habit of enlivening societies which they would have scorned to approach, still more frequently than their own, with eloquence no less magnificent; with wit, in all likelihood still more daring; often enough, as the superiors whom he fronted without alarm might have guessed from the beginning, and had ere long no occasion to guess, with wit pointed at themselves."

The farther we remove from this scene, the more singular will it seem to us: details of the exterior aspect of it are already full of interest. Most readers recollect

Mr. Walker's personal interviews with Burns as among the best passages of his Narrative: a time will come when this reminiscence of Sir Walter Scott's, slight though it is, will also be precious:

"As for Burns," writes Sir Walter, "I may truly say, *Virgilium vidi tantùm*. I was a lad of fifteen in 1786–7, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him; but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with the gentry of the west country, the two sets that he most frequented. Mr. Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner; but had no opportunity to keep his word; otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Ferguson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course, we youngsters sat silent, looked and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns's manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side,—on the other, his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:

> "'Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
> Perhaps that mother wept her soldier slain;
> Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
> The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
> Gave the sad presage of his future years,
> The child of misery baptized in tears.'

"Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather by the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were; and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langborne's called by the unpromising title of 'The Justice of Peace.' I whispered my information to a friend present; he mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received and still recollect with very great pleasure.

"His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect perhaps from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents.

His features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth's picture: but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I should have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school, *i. e.*, none of your modern agriculturists who keep laborers for their drudgery, but the *douce gudeman* who held his own plow. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted; nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognize me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh: but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day) the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

"I remember, on this occasion I mention, I thought Burns's acquaintance with English poetry was rather limited; and also that, having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Fergusson, he talked of them with too much humility as his models: there was doubtless national predilection in his estimate.

"This is all I can tell you about Burns. I have only to add, that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the laird. I do not speak *in malam partem*, when I say, I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station or information more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the late Duchess of Gordon remark this.—I do not know anything I can add to these recollections of forty years since."

The conduct of Burns under this dazzling blaze of favor; the calm, unaffected, manly manner in which he not only

bore it, but estimated its value, has justly been regarded as the best proof that could be given of his real vigor and integrity of mind. A little natural vanity, some touches of hypocritical modesty, some glimmerings of affectation, at least some fear of being thought affected, we could have pardoned in almost any man; but no such indication is to be traced here. In his unexampled situation the young peasant is not a moment perplexed; so many strange lights do not confuse him, do not lead him astray. Nevertheless, we cannot but perceive that this winter did him great and lasting injury. A somewhat clearer knowledge of men's affairs, scarcely of their characters, it did afford him; but a sharper feeling of Fortune's unequal arrangements in their social destiny is also left with him. He had seen the gay and gorgeous arena, in which the powerful are born to play their parts; nay, had himself stood in the midst of it; and he felt more bitterly than ever, that here he was but a looker-on, and had no part or lot in that splendid game. From this time a jealous indignant fear of social degradation takes possession of him; and perverts, so far as aught could pervert, his private contentment, and his feelings towards his richer fellows. It was clear to Burns that he had talent enough to make a fortune, or a hundred fortunes, could he but have rightly willed this; it was clear also that he willed something far different, and therefore could not make one. Unhappy it was that he had not power to choose the one, and reject the other; but must halt forever between two opinions, two objects; making hampered advancement towards either. But so it is with many men: we "long for the merchandise, yet would fain keep the price"; and so stand chaffering with Fate, in vexatious altercation, till the night come, and our fair is over!

The Edinburgh Learned of that period were in gen-

eral more noted for clearness of head than for warmth of heart: with the exception of the good old Blacklock, whose help was too ineffectual, scarcely one among them seems to have looked at Burns with any true sympathy, or indeed much otherwise than as at a highly curious *thing*. By the great also he is treated in the customary fashion; entertained at their tables and dismissed: certain modica of pudding and praise are, from time to time, gladly exchanged for the fascination of his presence; which exchange once effected, the bargain is finished, and each party goes his several way. At the end of this strange season, Burns gloomily sums up his gains and losses, and meditates on the chaotic future. In money he is somewhat richer; in fame and the show of happiness, infinitely richer; but in the substance of it, as poor as ever. Nay, poorer; for his heart is now maddened still more with the fever of worldly Ambition; and through long years the disease will rack him with unprofitable sufferings, and weaken his strength for all true and nobler aims.

What Burns was next to do or to avoid; how a man so circumstanced was now to guide himself towards his true advantage, might at this point of time have been a question for the wisest. It was a question too, which apparently he was left altogether to answer for himself: of his learned or rich patrons it had not struck any individual to turn a thought on this so trivial matter. Without claiming for Burns the praise of perfect sagacity, we must say, that his Excise and Farm scheme does not seem to us a very unreasonable one; that we should be at a loss, even now, to suggest one decidedly better. Certain of his admirers have felt scandalized at his ever resolving to *gauge;* and would have had him lie at the pool, till the spirit of Patronage stirred the waters, that so, with one friendly plunge, all his sorrows might be

healed. Unwise counselors! They know not the manner of this spirit; and how, in the lap of most golden dreams, a man might have happiness, were it not that in the interim he must die of hunger! It reflects credit on the manliness and sound sense of Burns, that he felt so early on what ground he was standing; and preferred self-help, on the humblest scale, to dependence and inaction, though with hope of far more splendid possibilities. But even these possibilities were not rejected in his scheme: he might expect, if it chanced that he *had* any friend, to rise, in no long period, into something even like opulence and leisure; while again, if it chanced that he had no friend, he could still live in security; and for the rest, he "did not intend to borrow honor from any profession." We reckon that his plan was honest and well-calculated: all turned on the execution of it. Doubtless it failed; yet not, we believe, from any vice inherent in itself. Nay, after all, it was no failure of external means, but of internal, that overtook Burns. His was no bankruptcy of the purse, but of the soul; to his last day, he owed no man anything.

Meanwhile he begins well: with two good and wise actions. His donation to his mother, munificent from a man whose income had lately been seven pounds a year, was worthy of him, and not more than worthy. Generous also, and worthy of him, was the treatment of the woman whose life's welfare now depended on his pleasure. A friendly observer might have hoped serene days for him: his mind is on the true road to peace with itself: what clearness he still wants will be given as he proceeds; for the best teacher of duties, that still lie dim to us, is the Practice of those we see and have at hand. Had the "patrons of genius," who could give him nothing, but taken nothing from him, at least nothing more! The

wounds of his heart would have healed, vulgar ambition would have died away. Toil and Frugality would have been welcome, since Virtue dwelt with them; and Poetry would have shone through them as of old: and in her clear ethereal light, which was his own by birthright, he might have looked down on his earthly destiny, and all its obstructions, not with patience only, but with love.

But the patrons of genius would not have it so. Picturesque tourists, all manner of fashionable danglers after literature, and, far worse, all manner of convivial Mæcenases, hovered round him in his retreat; and his good as well as his weak qualities secured them influence over him. He was flattered by their notice; and his warm social nature made it impossible for him to shake them off, and hold on his way apart from them. These men, as we believe, were proximately the means of his ruin. Not that they meant him any ill; they only meant themselves a little good; if he suffered harm, let *him* look to it! But they wasted his precious time and his precious talent; they disturbed his composure, broke down his returning habits of temperance and assiduous contented exertion. Their pampering was baneful to him; their cruelty, which soon followed, was equally baneful. The old grudge against Fortune's inequality awoke with new bitterness in their neighborhood; and Burns had no retreat but to "the Rock of Independence," which is but an air-castle after all, that looks well at a distance, but will screen no one from real wind and wet. Flushed with irregular excitement, exasperated alternately by contempt of others, and contempt of himself, Burns was no longer regaining his peace of mind, but fast losing it forever. There was a hollowness at the heart of his life, for his conscience did not now approve what he was doing.

Amid the vapors of unwise enjoyment, of bootless re-

morse, and angry discontent with Fate, his true loadstar, a life of Poetry, with Poverty, nay with Famine if it must be so, was too often altogether hidden from his eyes. And yet he sailed a sea, where without some such loadstar there was no right steering. Meteors of French Politics rise before him, but these were not *his* stars. An accident this, which hastened, but did not originate, his worst distresses. In the mad contentions of that time, he comes in collision with certain official Superiors; is wounded by them; cruelly lacerated, we should say, could a dead mechanical implement, in any case, be called cruel: and shrinks, in indignant pain, into deeper self-seclusion, into gloomier moodiness than ever. His life has now lost its unity: it is a life of fragments; led with little aim, beyond the melancholy one of securing its own continuance,—in fits of wild false joy when such offered, and of black despondency when they passed away. His character before the world begins to suffer: calumny is busy with him; for a miserable man makes more enemies than friends. Some faults he has fallen into, and a thousand misfortunes; but deep criminality is what he stands accused of, and they that are *not* without sin cast the first stone at him! For is he not a well-wisher to the French Revolution, a Jacobin, and therefore in that one act guilty of all? These accusations, political and moral, it has since appeared, were false enough: but the world hesitated little to credit them. Nay, his convivial Mæcenases themselves were not the last to do it. There is reason to believe that, in his later years, the Dumfries Aristocracy had partly withdrawn themselves from Burns, as from a tainted person, no longer worthy of their acquaintance. That painful class, stationed, in all provincial cities, behind the outmost breastwork of Gentility, there to stand siege and do battle against the intrusions of Grocerdom and Grazierdom,

had actually seen dishonor in the society of Burns, and branded him with their veto; had, as we vulgarly say, *cut* him! We find one passage in this Work of Mr. Lockhart's, which will not out of our thoughts:

"A gentlemen of that county, whose name I have already more than once had occasion to refer to, has often told me that he was seldom more grieved, than when riding into Dumfries one fine summer evening about this time to attend a county ball, he saw Burns walking alone, on the shady side of the principal street of the town, while the opposite side was gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night, not one of whom appeared willing to recognize him. The horseman dismounted, and joined Burns, who on his proposing to cross the street said: 'Nay, nay, my young friend, that's all over now;' and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizzel Baillie's pathetic ballad:

"'His bonnet stood ance fu' fair on his brow,
His auld ane look'd better than mony ane's new;
But now he lets 't wear ony way it will hing,
And casts himsell dowie upon the corn-bing.

"'O, were we young as we ance hae been,
We sud hae been galloping down on yon green,
And linking it ower the lily-white lea!
And werena my heart light, I wad die.'

It was little in Burns's character to let his feelings on certain subjects escape in this fashion. He, immediately after reciting these verses, assumed the sprightliness of his most pleasing manner; and taking his young friend home with him, entertained him very agreeably till the hour of the ball arrived."

Alas! when we think that Burns now sleeps "where bitter indignation can no longer lacerate his heart," and that most of those fair dames and frizzled gentlemen already lie at his side, where the breastwork of gentility is quite thrown down,—who would not sigh over the thin delusions and foolish toys that divide heart from heart, and make man unmerciful to his brother!

It was not now to be hoped that the genius of Burns would ever reach maturity, or accomplish aught worthy of itself. His spirit was jarred in its melody; not the soft breath of natural feeling, but the rude hand of Fate, was now sweeping over the strings. And yet what harmony was in him, what music even in his discords! How the wild tones had a charm for the simplest and the wisest; and all men felt and knew that here also was one of the Gifted! "If he entered an inn at midnight after all the inmates were in bed, the news of his arrival circulated from the cellar to the garret; and ere ten minutes had elapsed, the landlord and all his guests were assembled!" Some brief, pure moments of poetic life were yet appointed him, in the composition of his Songs. We can understand how he grasped at this employment; and how, too, he spurned all other reward for it but what the labor itself brought him. For the soul of Burns, though scathed and marred, was yet living in its full moral strength, though sharply conscious of its errors and abasement: and here, in his destitution and degradation, was one act of seeming nobleness and self devotedness left even for him to perform. He felt too, that with all the "thoughtless follies" that had "laid him low," the world was unjust and cruel to him; and he silently appealed to another and calmer time. Not as a hired soldier, but as a patriot, would he strive for the glory of his country: so he cast from him the poor sixpence a day, and served zealously as a volunteer. Let us not grudge him this last luxury of his existence; let him not have appealed to us in vain! The money was not necessary to him; he struggled through without it: long since, these guineas would have been gone, and now the high-mindedness of refusing them will plead for him in all hearts forever.

We are here arrived at the crisis of Burns's life; for

matters had now taken such a shape with him as could not long continue. If improvement was not to be looked for, Nature could only for a limited time maintain this dark and maddening warfare against the world and itself. We are not medically informed whether any continuance of years was, at this period, probable for Burns; whether his death is to be looked on as in some sense an accidental event, or only as the natural consequence of the long series of events that had preceded. The latter seems to be the likelier opinion; and yet it is by no means a certain one. At all events, as we have said, *some* change could not be very distant. Three gates of deliverance, it seems to us, were open for Burns: clear poetical activity; madness; or death. The first, with longer life, was still possible, though not probable; for physical causes were beginning to be concerned in it: and yet Burns had an iron resolution; could he but have seen and felt, that not only his highest glory, but his first duty, and the true medicine for all his woes, lay here. The second was still less probable; for his mind was ever among the clearest and firmest. So the milder third gate was opened for him: and he passed, not softly yet speedily, into that still country, where the hail-storms and fire-showers do not reach, and the heaviest-laden wayfarer at length lays down his load!

Contemplating this sad end of Burns, and how he sank unaided by any real help, uncheered by any wise sympathy, generous minds have sometimes figured to themselves, with a reproachful sorrow, that much might have been done for him; that by counsel, true affection and friendly ministrations, he might have been saved to himself and the world. We question whether there is not more tenderness of heart than soundness of judgment in

these suggestions. It seems dubious to us whether the richest, wisest, most benevolent individual could have lent Burns any effectual help. Counsel, which seldom profits any one, he did not need; in his understanding, he knew the right from the wrong, as well perhaps as any man ever did; but the persuasion, which would have availed him, lies not so much in the head as in the heart, where no argument or expostulation could have assisted much to implant it. As to money again, we do not believe that this was his essential want; or well see how any private man could, even presupposing Burns's consent, have bestowed on him an independent fortune, with much prospect of decisive advantage. It is a mortifying truth, that two men, in any rank of society, could hardly be found virtuous enough to give money, and to take it as a necessary gift, without injury to the moral entireness of one or both. But so stands the fact: Friendship, in the old heroic sense of that term, no longer exists; except in the cases of kindred or other legal affinity, it is in reality no longer expected, or recognized as a virtue among men. A close observer of manners has pronounced "Patronage," that is, pecuniary or other economic furtherance, to be "twice cursed"; cursing him that gives, and him that takes! And thus, in regard to outward matters also, it has become the rule, as in regard to inward it always was and must be the rule, that no one shall look for effectual help to another; but that each shall rest contented with what help he can afford himself. Such, we say, is the principle of modern Honor; naturally enough growing out of that sentiment of Pride, which we inculcate and encourage as the basis of our whole social morality. Many a poet has been poorer than Burns; but no one was ever prouder: we may question whether, without great precautions, even a pension from Royalty would not

have galled and encumbered, more than actually assisted him.

Still less, therefore, are we disposed to join with another class of Burns's admirers, who accuse the higher ranks among us of having ruined Burns by their selfish neglect of him. We have already stated our doubts whether direct pecuniary help, had it been offered, would have been accepted, or could have proved very effectual. We shall readily admit, however, that much was to be done for Burns; that many a poisoned arrow might have been warded from his bosom; many an entanglement in his path cut asunder by the hand of the powerful; and light and heat, shed on him from high places, would have made his humble atmosphere more genial; and the softest heart then breathing might have lived and died with some fewer pangs. Nay, we shall grant farther, and for Burns it is granting much, that, with all his pride, he would have thanked, even with exaggerated gratitude, any one who had cordially befriended him: patronage, unless once cursed, needed not to have been twice so. At all events, the poor promotion he desired in his calling might have been granted: it was his own scheme, therefore likelier than any other to be of service. All this it might have been a luxury, nay, it was a duty, for our nobility to have done. No part of all this, however, did any of them do; or apparently attempt, or wish to do: so much is granted against them. But what then is the amount of their blame? Simply that they were men of the world, and walked by the principles of such men; that they treated Burns, as other nobles and other commoners had done other poets; as the English did Shakespeare; as King Charles and his Cavaliers did Butler, as King Philip and his Grandees did Cervantes. Do men gather grapes of thorns; or shall we cut down our thorns for yielding only

a *fence* and haws? How, indeed, could the "nobility and gentry of his native land" hold out any help to this "Scottish Bard, proud of his name and country?" Were the nobility and gentry so much as able rightly to help themselves? Had they not their game to preserve; their borough interests to strengthen; dinners, therefore, of various kinds to eat and give? Were their means more than adequate to all this business, or less than adequate? Less than adequate, in general; few of them in reality were richer than Burns; many of them were poorer; for sometimes they had to wring their supplies, as with thumb-screws, from the hard hand; and, in their need of guineas, to forget their duty of mercy; which Burns was never reduced to do. Let us pity and forgive them. The game they preserved and shot, the dinners they ate and gave, the borough interests they strengthened, the *little* Babylons they severally builded by the glory of their might, are all melted or melting back into the primeval Chaos, as man's merely selfish endeavors are fated to do: and here was an action, extending, in virtue of its worldly influence, we may say, through all time; in virtue of its moral nature, beyond all time, being immortal as the Spirit of Goodness itself; this action was offered them to do, and light was not given them to do it. Let us pity and forgive them. But better than pity let us go and *do otherwise*. Human suffering did not end with the life of Burns; neither was the solemn mandate, "Love one another, bear one another's burdens," given to the rich only, but to all men. True, we shall find no Burns to relieve, to assuage by our aid or our pity; but celestial natures, groaning under the fardels of a weary life, we shall still find; and that wretchedness which Fate has rendered *voiceless* and *tuneless* is not the least wretched, but the most.

Still, we do not think that the blame of Burns's fail-

ure lies chiefly with the world. The world, it seems to us, treated him with more rather than with less kindness than it usually shows to such men. It has ever, we fear, shown but small favor to its Teachers; hunger and nakedness, perils and revilings, the prison, the cross, the poison-chalice have, in most times and countries, been the market-price it has offered for Wisdom, the welcome with which it has greeted those who have come to enlighten and purify it. Homer and Socrates, and the Christian Apostles, belong to old days; but the world's Martyrology was not completed with these. Roger Bacon and Galileo languish in priestly dungeon; Tasso pines in the cell of a madhouse; Camoëns dies begging on the streets of Lisbon. So neglected, so "persecuted they the Prophets," not in Judea only, but in all places where men have been. We reckon that every poet of Burns's order is, or should be, a prophet and teacher to his age; that he has no right to expect great kindness from it, but rather is bound to do it great kindness; that Burns, in particular, experienced fully the usual proportion of the world's goodness; and that the blame of his failure, as we have said, lies not chiefly with the world.

Where, then, does it lie? We are forced to answer: With himself; it is his inward, not his outward, misfortunes that bring him to the dust. Seldom, indeed, is it otherwise; seldom is a life morally wrecked but the grand cause lies in some internal mal-arrangement, some want less of good fortune than of good guidance. Nature fashions no creature without implanting in it the strength needful for its action and duration; least of all does she so neglect her masterpiece and darling, the poetic soul. Neither can we believe that it is in the power of *any* external circumstances utterly to ruin the mind of a man; nay, if proper wisdom be given him, even so much as to

affect its essential health and beauty. The sternest sum-total of all worldly misfortunes is Death; nothing more *can* lie in the cup of human woe: yet many men, in all ages, have triumphed over Death, and led it captive; converting its physical victory into a moral victory for themselves, into a seal and immortal consecration for all that their past life had achieved. What has been done, may be done again: nay, it is but the degree and not the kind of such heroism that differs in different seasons; for without some portion of this spirit, not of boisterous daring, but of silent fearlessness, of Self-denial in all its forms, no good man, in any scene or time, has ever attained to be good.

We have already stated the error of Burns; and mourned over it, rather than blamed it. It was the want of unity in his purposes, of consistency in his aims; the hapless attempt to mingle in friendly union the common spirit of the world with the spirit of poetry, which is of a far different and altogether irreconcilable nature. Burns was nothing wholly, and Burns could be nothing, no man formed as he was can be anything, by halves. The heart, not of a mere hot-blooded, popular Versemonger, or poetical *Restaurateur*, but of a true Poet and Singer, worthy of the old religious heroic times, had been given him: and he fell in an age, not of heroism and religion, but of skepticism, selfishness and triviality, when true Nobleness was little understood, and its place supplied by a hollow, dissocial, altogether barren and unfruitful principle of Pride. The influences of that age, his open, kind, susceptible nature, to say nothing of his highly untoward situation, made it more than usually difficult for him to cast aside, or rightly subordinate; the better spirit that was within him ever sternly demanded its rights, its supremacy: he spent his life in endeavoring to reconcile

these two; and lost it, as he must lose it, without reconciling them.

Burns was born poor; and born also to continue poor, for he would not endeavor to be otherwise: this it had been well could he have once for all admitted, and considered as finally settled. He was poor, truly; but hundreds even of his own class and order of minds have been poorer, yet have suffered nothing deadly from it: nay, his own Father had a far sorer battle with ungrateful destiny than his was; and he did not yield to it, but died courageously warring, and to all moral intents prevailing, against it. True, Burns had little means, had even little time for poetry, his only real pursuit and vocation; but so much the more precious was what little he had. In all these external respects his case was hard; but very far from the hardest. Poverty, incessant drudgery and much worse evils, it has often been the lot of Poets and wise men to strive with, and their glory to conquer. Locke was banished as a traitor; and wrote his *Essay on the Human Understanding*, sheltering himself in a Dutch garret. Was Milton rich or at his ease when he composed *Paradise Lost?* Not only low, but fallen from a height; not only poor, but impoverished; in darkness and with dangers compassed round, he sang his immortal song, and found fit audience, though few. Did not Cervantes finish his work, a maimed soldier and in prison? Nay, was not the *Araucana*, which Spain acknowledges as its Epic, written without even the aid of paper; on scraps of leather, as the stout fighter and voyager snatched any moment from that wild warfare?

And what, then, had these men, which Burns wanted? Two things; both which, it seems to us, are indispensable for such men. They had a true, religious principle of morals; and a single, not a double aim in their ac-

tivity. They were not self-seekers and self-worshipers; but seekers and worshipers of something far better than Self. Not personal enjoyment was their object; but a high, heroic idea of Religion, of Patriotism, of heavenly Wisdom, in one or the other form, ever hovered before them; in which cause they neither shrank from suffering, or called on the earth to witness it as something wonderful; but patiently endured, counting it blessedness enough so to spend and be spent. Thus the "golden-calf of Self-love," however curiously carved, was not their Deity; but the invisible Goodness, which alone is man's reasonable service. This feeling was as a celestial fountain, whose streams refreshed into gladness and beauty all the provinces of their otherwise too desolate existence. In a word, they willed one thing, to which all other things were subordinated and made subservient; and therefore they accomplished it. The wedge will rend rocks; but its edge must be sharp and single: if it be double, the wedge is bruised in pieces and will rend nothing.

Part of this superiority these men owed to their age; in which heroism and devotedness were still practised, or at least not yet disbelieved in: but much of it likewise they owed to themselves. With Burns, again, it was different. His morality, in most of its practical points is that of a mere worldly man; enjoyment, in a finer or coarser shape, is the only thing he longs and strives for. A noble instinct sometimes raises him above this; but an instinct only, and acting only for moments. He has no Religion; in the shallow age, where his days were cast, Religion was not discriminated from the New and Old Light *forms* of Religion; and was, with these, becoming obsolete in the minds of men. His heart, indeed, is alive with a trembling adoration, but there is no temple in his understanding. He lives in darkness and in the shadow

of doubt. His religion, at best, is an anxious wish; like that of Rabelais, "a great Perhaps."

He loved Poetry warmly, and in his heart; could he but have loved it purely, and with his whole undivided heart, it had been well. For Poetry, as Burns could have followed it, is but another form of Wisdom, of Religion; is itself Wisdom and Religion. But this also was denied him. His poetry is a stray vagrant gleam, which will not be extinguished within him, yet rises not to be the true light of his path, but is often a wildfire that misleads him. It was not necessary for Burns to be rich, to be, or to seem, "independent"; but it *was* necessary for him to be at one with his own heart; to place what was highest in his nature highest also in his life; "to seek within himself for that consistency and sequence, which external events would forever refuse him." He was born a poet; poetry was the celestial element of his being, and should have been the soul of his whole endeavors. Lifted into that serene ether, whither he had wings given him to mount, he would have needed no other elevation: poverty, neglect, and all evil, save the desecration of himself and his Art, were a small matter to him; the pride and the passions of the world lay far beneath his feet; and he looked down alike on noble and slave, on prince and beggar, and all that wore the stamp of man, with clear recognition, with brotherly affection, with sympathy, with pity. Nay, we question whether for his culture as a Poet poverty and much suffering for a season were not absolutely advantageous. Great men, in looking back over their lives, have testified to that effect. "I would not for much," says Jean Paul, " that I had been born richer." And yet Paul's birth was poor enough; for, in another place, he adds: "The prisoner's allowance is bread and water; and I had often only the latter." But

the gold that is refined in the hottest furnace comes out the purest; or, as he has himself expressed it, "the canary bird sings sweeter the longer it has been trained in a darkened cage."

A man like Burns might have divided his hours between poetry and virtuous industry; industry which all true feeling sanctions, nay, prescribes, and which has a beauty, for that cause, beyond the pomp of thrones: but to divide his hours between poetry and rich men's banquets was an ill-starred and inauspicious attempt. How could he be at ease at such banquets? What had he to do there, mingling his music with the coarse roar of altogether earthly voices; brightening the thick smoke of intoxication with fire lent him from heaven? Was it his aim to *enjoy* life? To-morrow he must go drudge as an Exciseman! We wonder not that Burns became moody, indignant, and at times an offender against certain rules of society; but rather that he did not grow utterly frantic, and run *amuck* against them all. How could a man, so falsely placed, by his own or others' fault, ever know contentment or peaceable diligence for an hour? What he did, under such perverse guidance, and what he forbore to do, alike fill us with astonishment at the natural strength and worth of his character.

Doubtless there was a remedy for this perverseness; but not in others; only in himself; least of all in simple increase of wealth and worldly "respectability." We hope we have now heard enough about the efficacy of wealth for poetry, and to make poets happy. Nay, have we not seen another instance of it in these very days? Byron, a man of an endowment considerably less ethereal than that of Burns, is born in the rank not of a Scottish plowman, but of an English peer: the highest worldly honors, the fairest worldly career, are his by inheritance; the

richest harvest of fame he soon reaps, in another province, by his own hand. And what does all this avail him? Is he happy, is he good, is he true? Alas, he has a poet's soul, and strives towards the Infinite and the Eternal; and soon feels that all this is but mounting to the house-top to reach the stars! Like Burns, he is only a proud man; might, like him, have "purchased a pocket-copy of Milton to study the character of Satan"; for Satan also is Byron's grand examplar, the hero of his poetry, and the model apparently of his conduct. As in Burns's case too, the celestial element will not mingle with the clay of earth; both poet and man of the world he must not be; vulgar Ambition will not live kindly with poetic Adoration; he *cannot* serve God and Mammon. Byron, like Burns, is not happy; nay, he is the most wretched of all men. His life is falsely arranged: the fire that is in him is not a strong, still, central fire, warming into beauty the products of a world; but it is the mad fire of a volcano; and now—we look sadly into the ashes of a crater, which ere long will fill itself with snow!

Byron and Burns were sent forth as missionaries to their generation, to teach it a higher Doctrine, a purer Truth; they had a message to deliver, which left them no rest till it was accomplished; in dim throes of pain, this divine behest lay smoldering within them; for they knew not what it meant, and felt it only in mysterious anticipation, and they had to die without articulately uttering it. They are in the camp of the Unconverted; yet not as high messengers of rigorous though benignant truth, but as soft flattering singers, and in pleasant fellowship will they live there: they are first adulated, then persecuted; they accomplish little for others; they find no peace for themselves, but only death and the peace of the grave. We confess, it is not without a certain

mournful awe that we view the fate of these noble souls, so richly gifted, yet ruined to so little purpose with all their gifts. It seems to us there is a stern moral taught in this piece of history,—*twice* told us in our own time! Surely to men of like genius, if there be any such, it carries with it a lesson of deep impressive significance. Surely it would become such a man, furnished for the highest of all enterprises, that of being the Poet of his Age, to consider well what it is that he attempts, and in what spirit he attempts it. For the words of Milton are true in all times, and were never truer than in this: "He who would write heroic poems must make his whole life a heroic poem." If he cannot first so make his life, then let him hasten from this arena; for neither its lofty glories, nor its fearful perils, are fit for him. Let him dwindle into a modish balladmonger; let him worship and be-sing the idols of the time, and the time will not fail to reward him. If, indeed, he can endure to live in that capacity! Byron and Burns could not live as idol-priests, but the fire of their own hearts consumed them; and better it was for them that they could not. For it is not in the favor of the great or of the small, but in a life of truth, and in the inexpugnable citadel of his own soul, that a Byron's or a Burns's strength must lie. Let the great stand aloof from him, or know how to reverence him. Beautiful is the union of wealth with favor and furtherance for literature; like the costliest flower-jar inclosing the loveliest amaranth. Yet let not the relation be mistaken. A true poet is not one whom they can hire by money or flattery to be a minister of their pleasures, their writer of occasional verses, their purveyor of table-wit; he cannot be their menial, he cannot even be their partisan. At the peril of both parties, let no such union be attempted! Will a Courser of the Sun work softly in

the harness of a Dray-horse? His hoofs are of fire, and his path is through the heavens, bringing light to all lands; will he lumber on mud highways, dragging ale for earthly appetites from door to door?

But we must stop short in these considerations, which would lead us to boundless lengths. We had something to say on the public moral character of Burns; but this also we must forbear. We are far from regarding him as guilty before the world, as guiltier than the average; nay, from doubting that he is less guilty than one of ten thousand. Tried at a tribunal far more rigid than that where the *Plebiscita* of common civic reputations are pronounced, he has seemed to us even there less worthy of blame than of pity and wonder. But the world is habitually unjust in its judgments of such men; unjust on many grounds, of which this one may be stated as the substance: it decides, like a court of law, by dead statutes; and not positively but negatively, less on what is done right, than on what is or is not done wrong. Not the few inches of deflection from the mathematical orbit, which are so easily measured, but the *ratio* of these to the whole diameter, constitutes the real aberration. This orbit may be a planet's, its diameter the breadth of the solar system; or it may be a city hippodrome; nay, the circle of a gin-horse, its diameter a score of feet or paces. But the inches of deflection only are measured: and it is assumed that the diameter of the gin-horse, and that of the planet, will yield the same ratio when compared with them! Here lies the root of many a blind, cruel condemnation of Burnses, Swifts, Rousseaus, which one never listens to with approval. Granted, the ship comes into harbor with shrouds and tackle damaged; the pilot is blameworthy; he has not been all-wise and all-powerful: but to know *how* blameworthy, tell us first whether his voyage

has been round the Globe, or only to Ramsgate and the Isle of Dogs.

With our readers in general, with men of right feeling anywhere, we are not required to plead for Burns. In pitying admiration he lies enshrined in all our hearts, in a far nobler mausoleum than that one of marble; neither will his Works, even as they are, pass away from the memory of men. While the Shakespeares and Miltons roll on like mighty rivers through the country of Thought, bearing fleets of traffickers and assiduous pearl-fishers on their waves; this little Valclusa Fountain will also arrest our eye: for this also is of Nature's own and most cunning workmanship, burst from the depths of the earth, with a full gushing current, into the light of day; and often will the traveler turn aside to drink of its clear waters, and muse among its rocks and pines!

Robert Burns

POEMS AND SONGS FROM BURNS

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT

INSCRIBED TO ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ., OF AYR

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.
—GRAY.

My lov'd, my honor'd, much respected friend!
No mercenary bard his homage pays;
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end,
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;
Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there, I ween.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh;
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose:
The toil-worn Cotter frae his labor goes,
This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an agéd tree;
Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin, stacher through
To meet their "dad," wi' flichterin' noise an' glee.
His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonilie,
His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labor an' his toil.

Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in,
At service out, amang the farmers roun';
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
A cannie errand to a neibor town:
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman-grown,
In youthfu' bloom—love sparkling in her e'e—
Comes hame, perhaps, to shew a braw new gown,
Or deposite her sair-won penny-fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

With joy unfeign'd, brothers and sisters meet,
An' each for other's weelfare kindly spiers:
The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet;
Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears;
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view;
The mother, wi' her needle an' her shears,
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new;
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

Their master's an' their mistress's command,
The yunkers a' are warnéd to obey;
An' mind their labors wi' an eydent hand,
An' ne'er, tho' out out o' sight, to jauk or play;

"An' O! be sure to fear the Lord alway,
An' mind your duty, duly, morn an' night!
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright."

But hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
Tells how a neibor lad cam o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek;
Wi' heart-struck anxious care, enquires his name,
While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak;
Weel-pleas'd the mother hears, it's nae wild, worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;
A strappin' youth, he takes the mother's eye;
Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en;
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
But blate an' laithfu', scarce can weel behave;
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the youth sae bashfu' an' sae grave;
Weel-pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like the lave.

O happy love! where love like this is found!
O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I've pacéd much this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare,—
"If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,

In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale."

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart—
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth!
Are honor, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The halsome parritch, chief o' Scotia's food;
The soupe their only hawkie does afford,
That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood:
The dame brings forth, in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell;
An' aft he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid;
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care,
And "Let us worship God!" he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise,
  They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim;
Perhaps "Dundee's" wild warbling measures rise,
  Or plaintive "Martyrs," worthy of the name;
Or noble "Elgin" beets the heaven-ward flame
  The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
  The tickl'd ears no heartfelt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they, with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
  How Abram was the friend of God on high;
Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage
  With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or, how the royal Bard did groaning lie
  Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
  Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;
Or other holy Seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
  How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He, who bore in Heaven the second name,
  Had not on earth whereon to lay His head:
How His first followers and servants sped;
  The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How he, who lone in Patmos banishéd,
  Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand;
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounc'd by Heaven's command.

Then kneeling down, to Heaven's Eternal King,
  The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing,"
  That thus they all shall meet in future days,

There, ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method, and of art;
When men display to congregations wide
Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart!
The Power, incens'd, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well pleas'd, the language of the soul;
And in his Book of Life the inmates poor enrol.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heav'n the warm request,
That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
"An honest man's the noblest work of God":
And certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refin'd!

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent,
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And, Oh, may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd Isle.

O Thou! who pour'd the patriotic tide,
That stream'd thro' Wallace's undaunted heart,
Who dar'd to, nobly, stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part:
(The patriot's God, peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert;
But still the patriot, and the patriot-bard
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

TO A MOUSE

ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST WITH THE PLOW, NOVEMBER, 1785

WEE, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
Wi' murd'ring pattle!

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,

An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle,
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whiles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen-icker in a thrave
'S a sma' request:
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,
And never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
O' foggage green!
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,
Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare and waste,
An' weary winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
Till crash! the cruel coulter past,
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:

The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promis'd joy.

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, Och! I backward cast my e'e
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOW, IN APRIL, 1786

Wee, modest, crimson-tippéd flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem.
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neibor sweet,
The bonie lark, companion meet!
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet!
Wi' spreckl'd breast,
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent-earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield,
High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield,
But thou, beneath the random bield
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie stibble-field,
Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sun-ward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betray'd,
And guileless trust,
Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid
Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!
Unskilful he to note the card
Of prudent lore,
Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er!

Such fate to suffering Worth is giv'n,
Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,
By human pride or cunning driv'n
To mis'ry's brink,
Till wrench'd of ev'ry stay but Heav'n,
He, ruin'd, sink!

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date;
Stern Ruin's plowshare drives, elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,
Shall be thy doom!

THE BANKS O' DOON

TUNE—*The Caledonian Hunt's Delight*

YE banks and braes o' bonie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary fu' o' care!
Thou'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird,
That wantons thro' the flowering thorn:
Thou minds me o' departed joys,
Departed—never to return.

Aft hae I rov'd by bonie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its Luve,
And fondly sae did I o' mine;
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree!
And my fause Luver staw my rose,
But ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

AULD LANG SYNE

SHOULD auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to min'?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne?

CHORUS

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.

We twa hae run about the braes,
And pu'd the gowans fine,
But we've wander'd mony a weary foot
Sin' auld lang syne.

We twa hae paidl't i' the burn,
From morning sun till dine;
But seas between us braid hae roar'd
Sin' auld lang syne.

And here's a hand, my trusty fier,
And gie's a hand o' thine;
And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught,
For auld lang syne.

HIGHLAND MARY

TUNE—*Katherine Ogie*

YE banks, and braes, and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery!
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers
Your waters never drumly:
There simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the langest tarry;
For there I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birk,
  How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade,
  I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden hours, on angel wings,
  Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me, as light and life,
  Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' mony a vow, and lock'd embrace,
  Our parting was fu' tender;
And, pledging aft to meet again,
  We tore oursels asunder;
But oh! fell death's untimely frost,
  That nipt my flower sae early!
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
  That wraps my Highland Mary.

O pale, pale now, those rosy lips,
  I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly!
And closed for aye the sparkling glance,
  That dwelt on me sae kindly!
And mold'ring now in silent dust,
  That heart that lo'ed me dearly
But still within my bosom's core
  Shall live my Highland Mary.

TO MARY IN HEAVEN

TUNE—*Miss Forbes' Farewell to Banff*

THOU ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
  Thou lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
  My Mary from my soul was torn.

O Mary! dear departed shade!
  Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
  Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

That sacred hour can I forget?
  Can I forget the hallow'd grove,
Where by the winding Ayr we met,
  To live one day of parting love?
Eternity will not efface
  Those records dear of transports past;
Thy image at our last embrace;
  Ah! little thought we 'twas our last!

Ayr gurgling kiss'd his pebbled shore,
  O'erhung with wild woods, thick'ning green;
The fragrant birch, and hawthorn hoar,
  Twin'd am'rous round the raptur'd scene.
The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,
  The birds sang love on every spray,
Till too, too soon the glowing west
  Proclaim'd the speed of wingéd day.

Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,
  And fondly broods with miser care!
Time but th' impression stronger makes,
  As streams their channels deeper wear.
My Mary, dear departed shade!
  Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

O, WERT THOU IN THE CAULD BLAST

TUNE—*The Lass of Livingstone*

O, WERT thou in the cauld blast,
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry airt,
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee.
Or did Misfortune's bitter storms
Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,
Thy bield should be my bosom,
To share it a', to share it a'.

Or were I in the wildest waste,
Of earth and air, of earth and air,
The desert were a paradise,
If thou wert there, if thou wert there.
Or were I monarch o' the globe,
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,
The only jewel in my crown
Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.

JOHN ANDERSON MY JO

JOHN ANDERSON my jo, John,
When we were first acquent,
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bonie brow was brent;
But now your brow is beld, John,
Your locks are like the snaw;
But blessings on your frosty pow,
John Anderson my jo.

John Anderson my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither;
And monie a cantie day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither:
Now we maun totter down, John,
But hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson my jo.

MY HEART'S IN THE HIGHLANDS

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;
Chasing the wild deer, and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.
Farewell to the Highlands, farewell to the North,
The birth-place of valor, the country of worth;
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,
The hills of the Highlands for ever I love.

Farewell to the mountains high cover'd with snow;
Farewell to the straths and green valleys below;
Farewell to the forests and wild-hanging woods;
Farewell to the torrents and loud-pouring floods.
My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;
Chasing the wild deer, and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.

MACPHERSON'S FAREWELL

Farewell, ye dungeons dark and strong,
The wretch's destinie!
Macpherson's time will not be long
On yonder gallows tree.

CHORUS

Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
  Sae dauntingly gaed he;
He play'd a spring and danc'd it round,
  Below the gallows tree.

Oh, what is death but parting breath?
  On monie a bloody plain
I've dar'd his face, and in this place
  I scorn him yet again!

Untie these bands from off my hands,
  And bring to me my sword;
And there's no man in all Scotland,
  But I'll brave him at a word.

I've liv'd a life of sturt and strife;
  I die by treacherie:
It burns my heart I must depart
  And not avengéd be.

Now farewell light, thou sunshine bright,
  And all beneath the sky!
May coward shame disdain his name,
  The wretch that dares not die!

BANNOCKBURN

ROBERT BRUCE'S ADDRESS TO HIS ARMY

To its ain Tune

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led,
Welcome to your gory bed,
  Or to victory!

Now's the day, and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lower;
See approach proud Edward's power,
Chains and slavery!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Let him turn and flee!

Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Free-man stand, or free-man fa',
Let him on wi' me!

By Oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they *shall* be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do—or die!

A MAN'S A MAN FOR A' THAT

Is there, for honest poverty,
That hangs his head, an' a' that?
The coward-slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that;
For a' that, an' a' that,
Our toils obscure, an' a' that;
The rank is but the guinea stamp;
The man's the gowd for a' that.

What tho' on hamely fare we dine,
  Wear hodden-gray, an' a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
  A man's a man for a' that.
    For a' that, an' a' that,
      Their tinsel show, an' a' that;
    The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
      Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
  Wha struts, an' stares, an' a' that;
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
  He's but a coof for a' that:
    For a' that, an' a' that,
      His ribband, star, an' a' that,
    The man o' independent mind,
      He looks an' laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak a belted knight,
  A marquis, duke, an' a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
  Guid faith he mauna fa' that!
    For a' that, an' a' that,
      Their dignities, an' a' that,
    The pith o' sense, an' pride o' worth,
      Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,
  (As come it will for a' that;)
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
  May bear the gree, an' a' that.
    For a' that, an' a' that,
      It's coming yet, for a' that,
    That man to man, the warld o'er,
      Shall brothers be for a' that.

NOTES AND COMMENT

(Heavy numerals refer to page; light ones to line)

1, 2. Butler: Samuel Butler (1612–1680), the author of *Hudibras*, was a clever satirist of the Puritans and therefore gave pleasure to King Charles, who in spite of promises, suffered him to live in neglect and poverty for seventeen years. Dryden, in petitioning for the payment of his own over-due pension, caustically remarks, "It is enough for one age to have starved Mr. Butler and neglected Mr. Cowley."

1, 6. The inventor of a spinning-jenny. James Hargreaves, the inventor of the spinning-jenny, suffered, in his own day, quite as badly as Burns, for he was driven out of Lancashire by the workmen who dreaded the introduction of machinery which would displace them.

1, 19. Sixth narrative: Heron's in 1797; Currie's in 1800; Cromek's in 1808; Walker's in 1811; Peterkin's in 1815; Lockhart's in 1828. The Centenary Edition of Burns, edited by W. E. Henley and T. F. Henderson, gives the latest and best narrative of Burns's life.

1, 21. Lockhart: John Gibson Lockhart (1794–1854), the son-in-law and biographer of Sir Walter Scott.

2, 5. Hero to his valet. The phrase came into vogue through Voltaire who derived it from Montaigne. It may be compared with the explanation as to why men do not fall in love with the poet's mistress:—

> "Sure, they would do so, but that,
> By the ordinance of fate,
> There is some concealed thing,
> So each gazer limiting,
> He can see no more of merit,
> Than beseems his worth and spirit."
> —George Withers.

2, 13. Sir Thomas Lucy and John a Combe. "Tradition says that Shakespeare joined some wild young fellows in breaking into Sir Thomas Lucy's park at Charlecote, about three miles from Stratford, and stealing his deer, for which, and for writing an im-

possibly bad ballad against Sir Thomas, the latter so persecuted the poet that he had to leave Stratford." (Furnivall.) Lucy is thought to be the original of Justice Shallow in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. John a Combe was a wealthy citizen of Stratford for whom Shakespeare wrote a semi-humorous epitaph.

2, 22. The Honorable Excise Commissioners. They have general charge of the collection of the excise or internal revenue duties on ale, spirits, and tobacco.

2, 23. Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt. See Introduction, page xxix.

2, 25. Ayr Writers: a Scotch term for solicitors, law agents; here Burns's friends, Gavin Hamilton and Robert Aiken, to the latter of whom he dedicated *The Cotter's Saturday Night*.

2, 25. The New and Old Light Clergy: the Progressive and the Conservative factions in the Scotch church. In *Twa Herds*, *Holy Willie's Prayer*, *The Holy Fair*, Burns attacks the Old Light party. Compare Barrie's *Auld Licht Idylls*.

3, 1. Dr. Currie: James Currie (1756–1805), a physician and author of a life of Burns, prefixed to a four-volume edition of Burns's work (1800). The proceeds, £800, were given to Mrs. Burns and her family, the author keeping none for himself.

3, 2. Mr. Walker: Josiah Walker, an intimate friend of the poet, who wrote a life of Burns for an edition of his poems published in 1811.

4, 3. Constable's Miscellany: a novel enterprise at that time for reprinting standard literature or new work in popular form and at cheap prices. Sir Walter Scott invited Lockhart to Abbotsford in 1825, to meet "Constable and James Ballantyne, who were to be there on a quiet consultation on some matters of great importance." Constable's *Miscellany of Original and Selected Publications in Literature, Science, and the Arts* was planned, and Lockhart agreed to write for it a *Life of Burns*. This was published in 1828. Constable was one of the most well-known British publishers,—the original publisher of the *Edinburgh Review* (for which Carlyle wrote his *Burns*, December, 1828), of the fifth and sixth editions of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and of many of Scott's novels. The failure of this publishing house plunged Scott into debt for £130,000, for the payment of which he began his heroic task of writing.

6, 22. Born in an age. Carlyle characterizes the eighteenth century as "the withered, unbelieving, second-hand, eighteenth century, with its artificial paste-board figures and productions."

6, 28. Ferguson: Robert Ferguson or Fergusson (1750–1774),

author of *The Farmer's Ingle*, from which Burns is said to have taken the idea of his *Cotter's Saturday Night*.

6, 28. **Ramsay:** Allan Ramsay (1686–1758), author of *The Gentle Shepherd*, a pastoral, and *The Tea Table Miscellany*. "To Ramsay and to Fergusson, then, he was indebted in a very uncommon degree, not only following their tradition and using their measures, but directly and avowedly imitating their pieces. . . . When we remember Burns's obligation to his predecessors, we must never forget his immense advances on them."—R. L. Stevenson: *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*.

7, 31. **Sir Hudson Lowe:** Governor of St. Helena and warden of Napoleon in captivity.

7, 33. **Amid the melancholy main.**

> "As when a shepherd of the Hebrid Isles,
> Placed far amid the melancholy main."
> Thomson: *Castle of Indolence*.

7, 33. **"Spectacle of pity and fear."** Aristotle speaks of pity and fear as the essential qualities in producing the true tragic effect.—*Poetics*, VI.

8, 32. **The Daisy.** See *To a Mountain Daisy*, page 77.

8, 33. **Wee, cowering.** See *To a Mouse*, page 75.

9, 1. **Thole:** to endure.

9, 1. **Dribble:** to drizzle.

9, 1. **Cranreuch:** hoar frost.

9, 1. **Winter.** See *Winter: a Dirge*.

9, 6. **Him that walketh.** See *Psalm* cix, 3. "It (winter) is my best season for devotion," writes Burns; "for my mind is wrapped up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him, who in the pompous language of Scripture 'walks on the wings of the wind.' At such a time was *Winter* composed."—*Commonplace Book*, April, 1874.

9, 15. **Arcadian illusion:** Arcadia, a district in the heart of the Peloponnesus, shut in on all sides by mountains, where dwelt a simple, pastoral people fond of music and dancing. The word has become a synonym for ideal simplicity and rustic beauty.

9, 21. **Over the lowest provinces of man's existence.** In his preface to *The Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth makes a strong plea for choosing subjects from humble life and from rustic life, because "there the essential passions of the human heart find a better soil in which they can attain maturity, are less under restraint." At the beginning of the eighteenth century, no characters from lowly life appear in poetry, except the conventional shepherd. Burns was

one of the leaders in letting down the barriers which had excluded the poor and the lowly from the domain of art.

10, 9. **His glowing heart.** See Scott's account (page 46, line 20) of the effect produced on Burns by the picture of the dead soldier and his dog beside him.

10, 17. **And this was he.** If a housewife tried out a pail of mutton tallow or brewed some home-made ale, Burns had to assess the trifling but vexatious tax on it.

10, 25. **A poor mutilated fraction.** Both Burns and Keats were cut off before the maturity of their powers and met the fate that Keats feared, in the lines:

> "When I have fears that I may cease to be
> Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain,
> Before high-piled books in charact'ry
> Hold like rich garners the full ripened grain."

11, 30. **Not from hearsay, but from sight and experience.** That the writer does not need to go far afield for his best material is ever to be borne in mind, as Burns himself illustrates. "The contemporaries of Burns were surprised that he should visit so many celebrated mountains and waterfalls, and not seize the opportunity to make a poem. Indeed, it is not for those who have a true command of the art of words, but for peddling, professional amateurs, that these pointed occasions are most useful and inspiring. . . . Whether it was a stormy night, a shepherd's collie, a sheep struggling in the snow, the conduct of cowardly soldiers in the field, the gait and cogitations of a drunken man, or only a village cockcrow in the morning, he could find language to give it freshness, body, and relief."—R. L. Stevenson: *Familiar Studies of Men and Books.* Compare also the famous lines of Sir Philip Sidney's sonnet:

> "Fool, said my Muse to me, look in thy heart and write."

12, 8. **Si vis me flere** [dolendum est primum ipsi tibi]. This quotation from Horace's *Ars Poetica* may be freely paraphrased: "If you would have me weep, you too must weep;" that is, the author's feeling must be deep and genuine in order to move others.

13, 11. **Harolds.** *Childe Harold* is the title of one of Byron's best-known poems. Byron, who had died four years before this essay, stood in Carlyle's mind for the mood of sentimental revolt, instead of for the mood of work, which Carlyle insisted on.

13, 12. **Giaours.** *The Giaour* is the title of a narrative poem

by Lord Byron, published in 1813. Giaour is the Turkish word for Christian, or from the Turkish point of view, for infidel.

15, 24. **Rose-colored Novels and iron-mailed Epics.** Scott and Cooper were at this time the great literary favorites.

15, 26. **Virgins of the Sun . . . Chiefs.** Carlyle probably refers to Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, Scott's *Talisman* and *Ivanhoe*, and Cooper's *Leather-Stocking Tales*.

16, 15. **The humblest subject.** Compare:

> "He was gone
> Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
> And showed my youth
> How Verse may build a princely throne
> On humble truth."
> Wordsworth: *At the Grave of Burns*.

16, 27. **Fears and hopes that wander through eternity:** perhaps reminiscent of Milton's lines:

> "Sad cure! for who would lose,
> Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
> Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
> To perish, rather swallowed up and lost
> In the wide womb of uncreated night."
> *Paradise Lost.*

16, 33. **Or are men suddenly grown wise.** Johnson records the fact that neither Swift nor Pope ever succumbed to laughter. Lord Chesterfield wrote to his son: "How low and unbecoming a thing laughter is! I am sure that since I have had the full use of my reason nobody has ever heard me laugh." Johnson used to say that "the size of a man's understanding might always be measured by his mirth" (Boynton). Carlyle's laugh is famous. See *Carlyle's Laugh*, *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. XLIII, page 463.

17, 2. **The poet.** Note the definition here given of the poet. Also page 16, line 18.

17, 7. **Delphi:** the great oracle of Apollo situated on the lower slopes of Parnassus, the most famous oracle of antiquity. Compare:

> "The Oracles are dumb;
> No voice or hideous hum
> Runs through the archèd roofs in words deceiving.
> Apollo from his shrine
> Can no more divine,
> With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
> No mighty trance, or breathed spell,
> Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.
> Milton: *Ode on the Nativity*.

17, 12. Minerva Press: a publishing house in London in the eighteenth century which sent forth the most tawdry and sensational literature.

18, 6. Mossgiel Tarbolton. See Introduction, pages xxvii, xxviii.

18, 7. Crockford's: a fashionable gambling resort in London.

18, 7. Tuileries: the palace in which the royal family lived in Paris. It was destroyed in the Commune.

18, 30. Theocritus: a Greek pastoral poet of the third century before Christ who wrote in the Sicilian dialect. In his preface to the first edition of his poems, Burns says: "The following trifles are not the productions of the poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and perhaps, amid the elegancies and idleness of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocritus or Virgil. . . . He (the author, that is, Burns) sings the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language."

18, 31. Council of Trent: a council which, just before Luther's death, was called by the Roman Catholic Church in Trent in the Tyrol, and is famous for its condemnation of the leading doctrines of the Reformation.

18, 32. Roman Jubilee: "a solemn festival of the Roman Catholic Church, usually held once in twenty-five years."

20, 4. The burin of a Retzsch: the engraving instrument of a skilled artist. Retzsch (1779–1857) illustrated the works of Goethe, Schiller, and Shakespeare.

20, 6. Of this last excellence. This paragraph does not appear in the original *Edinburgh Review* article.

20, 12. Boreas: the north wind.

20, 12. Doure: stern.

20, 14. Glour: glimmer.

20, 15. The lift: the sky.

20, 20. Burns: brooks.

20, 20. Wreathes: drifts.

20, 22. Bock'd: gushed.

20, 32. Auld Brig: from Burns's dialogue between *The Brigs of Ayr*. The reference should be *New* not *Auld Brig*.

21, 5. Thowes: thaws.

21, 6. Snaw-broo: snow-broth or slushy snow.

21, 7. Speat: a sweeping current after a rain or thaw.

21, 8. Brigs: bridges.

21, 12. Gumlie jaups: muddy jets.

21, 13. Poussin: Nicholas Poussin (1594–1665), a famous French landscape painter, who painted a picture of the Deluge.

21, 17. The Farmer's. The full title is, *The Auld Farmer's New Year Morning Salutation to his Auld Mare Maggie.*

21, 19. Smithy of the Cyclops. See *Odyssey*, Book IX.

21, 20. Yoking of Priam's Chariot. See *Iliad*, Book XXIV.

21, 20. Burn-the-wind: blacksmith. In the poem *Scotch Drink* the blacksmith is referred to as Burnewin.

22, 5. Richardson: Samuel Richardson (1689–1761), author of our first English novel *Pamela*, and the more famous *Clarissa Harlowe.*

22, 5. Defoe: Daniel Defoe (1660–1731), best known as the author of *Robinson Crusoe.*

22, 23. Red-wat-shod: wading in blood. See *Epistle to William Simpson:*

> "At Wallace' name, what Scottish blood
> But boils up in a springtide flood?
> Oft have our fearless fathers strode
> By Wallace' side,
> Still pressing onward, red-wat-shod,
> Or glorious dy'd!"

22, 29. Professor Stewart. Dugald Stewart (1753–1828) was Professor of Morals in Edinburgh University and one of the first of the great men to become interested in Burns.

23, 5. Keats. John Keats (1795–1821) is acknowledged as one of our greatest poets; but because his work was devoted to pure beauty rather than to the interest of morals, Carlyle had no sympathy with him. See Matthew Arnold's *Essay on John Keats* for a fine appreciation of the poet.

23, 20. Novum Organum: a work (1620) by Lord Bacon, in which he set forth the inductive method of studying science. The phrase means "new instrument."

25, 30. Ourie: shivering.

25, 31. Brattle: fury.

25, 33. Deep-lairing: deep-wading.

25, 33. Sprattle: scramble.

25, 34. Scaur: a bare, rocky cliff.

26, 1. Ilk: each.

26, 5. Chittering: trembling with cold.

26, 16. Aiblins: perhaps.

26, 17. Wae: sorry (woe).

26, 20. Dr. Slop and uncle Toby: characters in *Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Sterne (1713–1768).

27, 1. Johnson . . . hater. "Dear Dr. Bathhurst was a man to my very heart's content; he hated a fool, and he hated a rogue, and he hated a Whig; he was a very good hater." This remark is attributed to Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), the noted essayist and author of Johnson's *Dictionary*.

27, 15. Furies of Æschylus. *The Eumenides*, a tragedy by Æschylus (525–426 B. C.), has a chorus of Furies.

28, 6. Macpherson's Farewell. James Macpherson, the freebooter, the subject of this splendid lyric, was hanged at the cross of Banff, on November 16, 1700. Banff is a seaport town, forty miles northwest of Aberdeen. This lyric was contributed by Burns to James Johnson's *Museum of Scottish Song*.

28, 9. Cacus: a giant and son of Vulcan, who was killed by Hercules for stealing cattle. See Virgil's *Æneid*, Book VII, lines 190–267.

28, 19. At Thebes, and in Pelops' line. Milton's *Il Penseroso* is the source of this now famous quotation:

> "Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
> In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
> Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
> Or the tale of Troy divine."

Thebes is the chief city of Bœotia. The descendants of Pelops—Atreus, Agamemnon, Orestes, and Iphigenia—are subjects of the greatest Greek tragedies.

28, 28. Spring: a lively dance.

30, 3. Tieck . . . Musäus. These poets were included in Carlyle's translations, in *German Romances*, with an essay on each, in which it is affirmed that Tieck is a true poet, Musäus, though graceful, an inferior poet.

30, 26. The Jolly Beggars. Carlyle's preference for *The Jolly Beggars* coincides with the verdict of many later critics, that it is Burns's masterpiece, as against *Tam o' Shanter*. Burns did not value *The Jolly Beggars* and never printed it in his lifetime. Ecclefechan, the birthplace of Carlyle, "was long a favorite resort of such vagabonds as are pictured in *The Jolly Beggars;* which may—or may not—account in some measure for Carlyle's affection for that admirable piece." Burns, in the course of his duty as supervisor, was accustomed to visit this "unfortunate, wicked little village."

30, 33. Raucle carlin: fearless old crone. **Wee Apollo:** a pigmy scraper with his fiddle.

30, 34. Son of Mars: a soldier.

31, 1. **Poosie Nansie:** the name of the keeper of the alehouse.

31, 10. **Caird:** a traveling tinker.

31, 11. **Brats and callets:** loose women.

31, 18. **Teniers.** David Teniers (1610–1690) was a great Dutch painter of rustic life.

31, 23. **Beggar's Opera:** a ballad opera, in which highwaymen and pickpockets are the chief characters, written by John Gay and first performed in 1728.

31, 24. **Beggar's Bush:** by John Fletcher and others, performed at Court in 1622. The plot is supposed to be taken from a novel by Cervantes. The *Beggar's Opera* and the *Beggar's Bush* deal with the same kind of life portrayed in the *Jolly Beggars*.

31, 30. **Songs.** Burns wrote in all nearly three hundred songs for James Johnson's *Museum* and George Thompson's *Scottish Airs*. Some are new versions of old songs and some are written for old tunes already well known.

32, 13. **Ossorius:** Jeronymo Osorio (1506–1580) whom Bacon refers to in *The Advancement of Learning* as the Cicero of Portugal. He stands in the mind of Carlyle as a type of those who care for words or details of form rather than for worth of content. Compare with Milton's ambition for his work,—"not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapors of wine like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amorist, or the trencher fury of some rhyming parasite."

33, 27. **Fletcher's aphorism.** This famous aphorism is attributed to Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun (1655–1716), a Scotch writer.

34, 21. **Grays and Glovers.** Thomas Gray (1716–1771), author of *An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, does not receive justice at Carlyle's hands. Richard Glover was deservedly a little-known poet, whose name one would not expect to be coupled with Gray.

34, 27. **Rambler:** a periodical after the style of Addison's *Spectator*, published in London (1750–1752) by Dr. Samuel Johnson. It dealt with ordinary affairs of English life in a Latinized style.

34, 27. **Rasselas:** a romance (1759) by Dr. Samuel Johnson, laid in Abyssinia.

35, 1. **John Boston:** a Presbyterian writer of *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* (1720).

35, 9. **Lord Kames:** Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696–1782), author of *Elements of Criticism*.

35, 10. **Hume:** David Hume (1711–1776), a Scotch philosopher and author of a famous *History of England*.

35, 10. Robertson: William Robertson (1721–1793), a Scotch historian and clergyman.

35, 10. Smith: Adam Smith (1723–1790), a noted political economist, author of *The Wealth of Nations*.

35, 19. Racine: Jean Racine (1639–1699), one of the greatest dramatists of France.

35, 20. Voltaire: François Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694–1778), one of the most noted French writers, a dramatist, essayist, and critic.

35, 20. Batteux: Charles Batteux (1713–1780), a French writer on æsthetics.

35, 20. Boileau: Nicholas Boileau-Despreaux (1636–1711), a famous French critic, satirist, and poet.

35, 22. Montesquieu: Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, a noted French philosophic writer, author of *L'Esprit des Lois*.

35, 22. Mably: Gabriel de Bonnat, Abbé de Mably (1709–1785), a French publicist.

35, 23. Quesnay: François Quesnay (1694–1774), a French political economist.

35, 27. La Flèche: a town on the river Loire in France, where David Hume spent several years composing his *Treatise on Human Nature*.

36, 17. Doctrine of Rent: a theory formulated in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

36, 17. Natural History of Religion: a book by David Hume.

36, 20. Sir Walter Scott. Carlyle's hope for a literature sprung from patriotism is realized, in part, in the work of Sir Walter Scott, who embodied in his novels much of the history and legend and tales of Scotland, especially in *Waverley*, *Old Mortality*, *Guy Mannering*, *The Heart of Midlothian*, *The Monastery*, and *The Abbott*.

36, 28. Racy virtues of the soil: these, in recent years, have been embodied in the work of a group of younger writers,—Stevenson, Barrie, Watson, and Crockett.

37, 16. A wish. See the *Epistles to the Guidwife of Wauchope House*.

37, 23. Bear: barley.

41, 13. Priest-like father. See *The Cotter's Saturday Night*.

41, 33. In glory and in joy: from Wordsworth's *Leech-Gatherer*. Quoted by Lockhart on the title-page of his *Life of Burns*.

43, 16. New-Light Priesthood. The New Light refers to the radical wing of the Scotch Church.

44, 24. Journey to Edinburgh: the first of his two visits, in 1786.

45, 2. **Rienzi:** Nicolo Gabrini (1313–1354), a popular Roman leader who headed an ineffectual revolt.

46, 5. **Virgilium vide tantùm:** "I have at least *seen* Virgil." Ovid, *Tristia*, IV, 10.

46, 32. **Langhorne:** John Langhorne (1735–1779), an obscure English poet, who with his brother, translated Plutarch's *Lives*.

47, 1. **Mr. Nasmyth's picture.** Alexander Nasmyth (1758–1840) painted the portrait of Burns in the National Gallery in London, where the portraits of famous British authors are assembled.

47, 31. **In malam partem:** "in bad part," *i. e.*, as if he would have had it different.

49, 2. **Blacklock:** Thomas Blacklock (1721–1791), the blind poet who first befriended Burns. See Introduction, page xxix.

49, 33. **Patronage.** Until toward the close of the eighteenth century, literary men were largely dependent on influential patrons for their living,—the rewards of writing not being in themselves sufficient. Although it was intimated to Pope that the dedication of his *Homer* would be acceptable to several persons in high authority, he dedicated it to a fellow craftsman, Congreve. The rise of the publishing houses freed writers from their dependence on patrons. Dr. Johnson's letter to Lord Chesterfield declining to have Chesterfield as patron of the *Dictionary*, is famous in literary history as practically the deathblow to patronage.

51, 10. **Mæcenases.** Mæcenas was the great patron of writers in the Augustan age of Latin literature, especially of Virgil and Horace. The word has come to mean a patron.

52, 24. **Jacobin:** a member of a club or society of French revolutionists organized and called Jacobin from the Jacobin convent in Paris in which they met.

52, 34. **Grocerdom and Grazierdom:** the trading and the farmer classes.

53, 19. **Corn-bing:** heap of grain.

53, 22. **Linking:** walking smartly.

53, 29. **Where bitter indignation.** The epitaph of Dean Swift, one of the greatest English satirists, contains the Latin original: "Ubi sæva indignatio cor ulterius lacerare nequit."

54, 16. **Spurned all other reward.** "Besides old materials, for the most part embellished with lines, if not verses of his own, and a whole body of hints, suggestions, and criticisms, Burns gave Mr. Thompson about sixty original songs placed by many eminent critics decidedly at the head of all our poet's performances." For this he refused to take payment. "In the honest enthusiasm with

which I embark in your undertaking," he writes, "to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, etc., would be downright prostitution of soul," a characteristic attitude of Burns.

55, 21. The milder third gate. Compare:

> "full many a time
> I have been half in love with *easeful* death,
> Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme."—Keats.

57, 33. Cervantes: Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616), the author of *Don Quixote*, who by means of his delicious satire, banished the extravagances of chivalry.

58, 31. Fardels: burdens. Compare Hamlet's soliloquy:

> "Who would fardels bear,
> To grunt and sweat under a weary life."

59, 11. Roger Bacon: an English philosopher (1214–1294), one of the "Schoolmen."

59, 11. Galileo. Galileo (1564–1642) supported the theory of Copernicus that the world moved, and by its movement caused the apparent movement of the heavens. The Inquisition cast him into prison for accepting this view as against the old view of Ptolemy, which regarded this earth as the center of the universe.

59, 12. Tasso: Torquato Tasso (1544–1595), an Italian, author of *Jerusalem Delivered*, an epic poem.

59, 13. Camoëns: Luiz de Camoëns (1524–1580), the most famous poet of Portugal. See

> "A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound,
> With it Camoëns soothed an exile's grief."
> Wordsworth: *On the Sonnet.*

60, 23. Restaurateur: a restaurant keeper.

61, 19. Locke was banished. Though not literally banished, Locke found it prudent to go to Holland because of his opposition to the Court. He was a famous English philosopher whose *Essay on the Human Understanding* is his best known work.

61, 27. Araucana: a Spanish heroic poem by Alonso Ercilla, in the sixteenth century.

63, 2. Rabelais: François Rabelais (1495–1553), a brilliant French satirist.

63, 31. Jean Paul: Jean Paul Richter (1763–1825), a German philosopher and poet in whom Carlyle had a special interest. He wrote an essay on Richter in 1827.

67, 12. **Plebiscita:** plural of *plebiscitum*; the decision or result of the vote of the people (*plebs*). In Carlyle's view, their vote was likely to be wrong.

67, 29. **Swifts:** Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), an English satirist, best known as the author of *Gulliver's Travels*.

67, 30. **Rousseaus:** Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), a writer who stated many of the ideas which found expression in the French Revolution.

68, 1. **Ramsgate:** a popular seaside resort in Kent.

68, 2. **Isle of Dogs:** an island in the Thames, now connected with the shore, three and a half miles east of St. Paul's, where the king's hounds were formerly kept.

68, 11. **Valclusa Fountain:** a fountain near Avignon made famous by the Italian poet Petrarch (1304–1374), who dwelt near it.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR STUDY

1. In commenting on Lockhart's *Life*, Carlyle indicates what the method of a good biography should be; what is this method?—See page 3, lines 29–33. 2. What are the defects mentioned in Dr. Currie's and Mr. Walker's biography of Burns? 3. Illustrate, by taking some well-known person, such as Washington or Lincoln, the difference between a detached catalogue of a man's attributes, virtues and vices, and the presentation of his character as a living unity. 4. Compare "An Old Scotch Gardener," John Todd in "Pastoral," and "Thomas Stevenson" (in R. L. Stevenson's *Memories and Portraits*), and J. M. Barrie's *Margaret Ogilvie*. Do these give separate generalities or are they fused into a vital unity? 5. What do you understand to be the difference between a closely organized piece of writing and a loosely organized one? 6. Are brief biographical notices in dictionaries likely to be a collection of facts and attributes or a living unity? Why? 7. What are the special merits and defects of Lockhart's biography? 8. What is the function of model biography, as defined by Carlyle? 9. If you were to write the biography of an author you have studied, what general points would you always try to consider? Would you add to or subtract from Carlyle's statement? 10. Under what disadvantages did Burns begin his work? 11. Contrast these with the advantages an educated man has at the outset. 12. The next paragraph (pages 6–7) contains a general summary of Burns's life in order to place the reader at the right point of view; to what is the heightened quality of style in this paragraph due? 13. To what aspect of Burns does Carlyle limit himself in his statement of the working theme of this essay? (see page 7, lines 25–26). 14. What are the characteristics of a true poet? 15. What justifies us in reading biographies; what is the profit to us? 16. What qualities in Burns, the man, reflect themselves in his poetry? 17. What qualities in the poems have made them endure? 18. What qualities does Carlyle include under Sincerity? 19. In what way is Burns compared with Byron, and how contrasted? 20. Whence does the poet, or the writer in general,

derive his material or subject-matter? Carlyle's discussion on this point is of great practical importance to every student who is writing compositions, as indicating the source of his best material. 21. What points in rebuttal of the argument that Burns was born too late, that poetry had fled his age, does Carlyle make? 22. What qualities of sterling worth in Burns's writings are sources of his moving power over others? Enumerate seven. Notice the poetical quality of Carlyle's own style in this paragraph (page 19, lines 4–34). 23. Make an outline of the characteristics of Burns as given in the next paragraphs (page 32, lines 24–34, page 33, lines 1–20). 24. What are the main points in the division on Burns's songs? 25. What is a song? Notice the qualities Carlyle emphasizes:

1. They have clear, manly, heartfelt sentiment.
2. They are in themselves music, fashioned in the medium of Harmony.
3. They have force and truth of inward meaning.
4. They have immense variety of subject.
   a. Fond flowing revel, as in *Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut.*
   b. Quiet sadness, as in *To Mary in Heaven.*
   c. Glad, kind greeting, as in *Auld Lang Syne.*
   d. Comic archness, as in *Duncan Gray.*
   e. Fire-eyed fury, as in *Scots wha hae.*

26. How does Carlyle make the transition from Burns's literary work to his life? 27. In the division of Burns's life into one era only, what point does Carlyle make as to the mistake of youth in seeking the true source of contentment? 28. What is the significance of the shortness of Burns's life and the lack of adjustment between "the clay soil of Mossgiel and the empyrean soul" of Burns? 29. What is Carlyle's view of the "Wild Oats" theory as a natural preparative for entering upon active life? 30. What was the influence of Burns's visit to Edinburgh? 31. What elements in Burns's life, after his return from Edinburgh, led to his undoing? "I leave Edinburgh," he writes, "in the course of ten days or a fortnight. I shall return to my rural shades in all likelihood never to quit them. I have formed many intimacies and friendships here, but I am afraid they are all of too tender a construction to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles." 32. How does Carlyle regard patronage? What effect had patronage on Burns? (It would be interesting to compare this with patronage as it existed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the case of Dryden, Swift, Addison, and Steele.) 33. Does the blame of Burns's failure lie with the world? If not, where does it lie? 34. How do Byron and Burns compare in this respect? 35. For what reasons

are the judgments of the world on men of genius so often unjust? Note Carlyle's plea for the errors of genius.

"Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentlier sister woman,
Tho' they may gang a kennin wrang;
To step aside is human.
One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving *why* they do it;
And just as lamely can ye mark
How far perhaps they rue it."

GLOSSARY TO POEMS AND SONGS

A', all.
Aboon, above.
A-gley, in a wrong direction; amiss.
Airt, direction, the point from which the wind blows.
Auld lang syne, old long ago.
Awa, away.

Bairns, children.
Baith, both.
Belyve, by and by.
Ben, through into the parlor.
Bickering, noisy.
Bield, habitation.
Big, to build.
Birk, the birch.
Birkie, a spirited fellow.
Blate, shame-faced.
Bonie, pretty, beautiful.
Braes, small hills.
Braid, broad.
Brattle, scamper.
Braw, fine.
Brent, smooth.
Burn, stream.
But, without.

Ca', call, drive.
Cannie, inoffensive, mild, careful.
Cantie, merry.
Cauld, cold.
Claes, clothes.
Coof, fool.
Coulter, a sharp-edged wheel, attached to the beam of a plow, to cut the ground.
Cracks, talks familiarly.
Cranreuch, hoar frost.
Craws, crows.

Daimen-icker, an ear of corn now and then.
Dine, noon.
Dribble, drizzle.
Drumly, muddy.

Eydent, diligent.

Fee, wages.
Fell, biting, keen, tasty.
Fier, brother, friend.
Flichterin', fluttering.
Foggage, a second growth of grass.
Frae, from.

Gang, go.
Gars, causes.
Gie, give.
Glinted, glanced.

Gowan, daisy.
Gowd, gold.
Gree, a prize.
Guid, good.

Hae, have.
Haffets, the temples.
Hafflins, partly.
Hain'd, saved, sparingly used.
Hald, an abiding place.
Hallan, a special partition wall in a cottage.
Halsome, wholesome.
Hawkie, cow.
Histie, dry, barren.
Hodden-gray, woollen cloth of coarse quality, made of black and white fleece.

Ilka, every.
Ingle, fire-place.

Kebbuck, cheese.
Kens, knows.
Kye, kine, cows.

Laith, loth, reluctant.
Laithfu', bashful, shy.
Lane, alone, single.
Lave, the rest.
Lea, a meadow or grassy plain.
Lint, flax. "Sin lint was i' the bell"; since flax was in flower.
Lyart, gray.

Maun, must.
Mauna fa' that, must not claim that.
Moil, toil.

Na, not.

Parritch, oatmeal stirabout.
Pattle, a small spade used to clean a plough.
Pow, head.

Rantingly, noisily.
Rin, run.

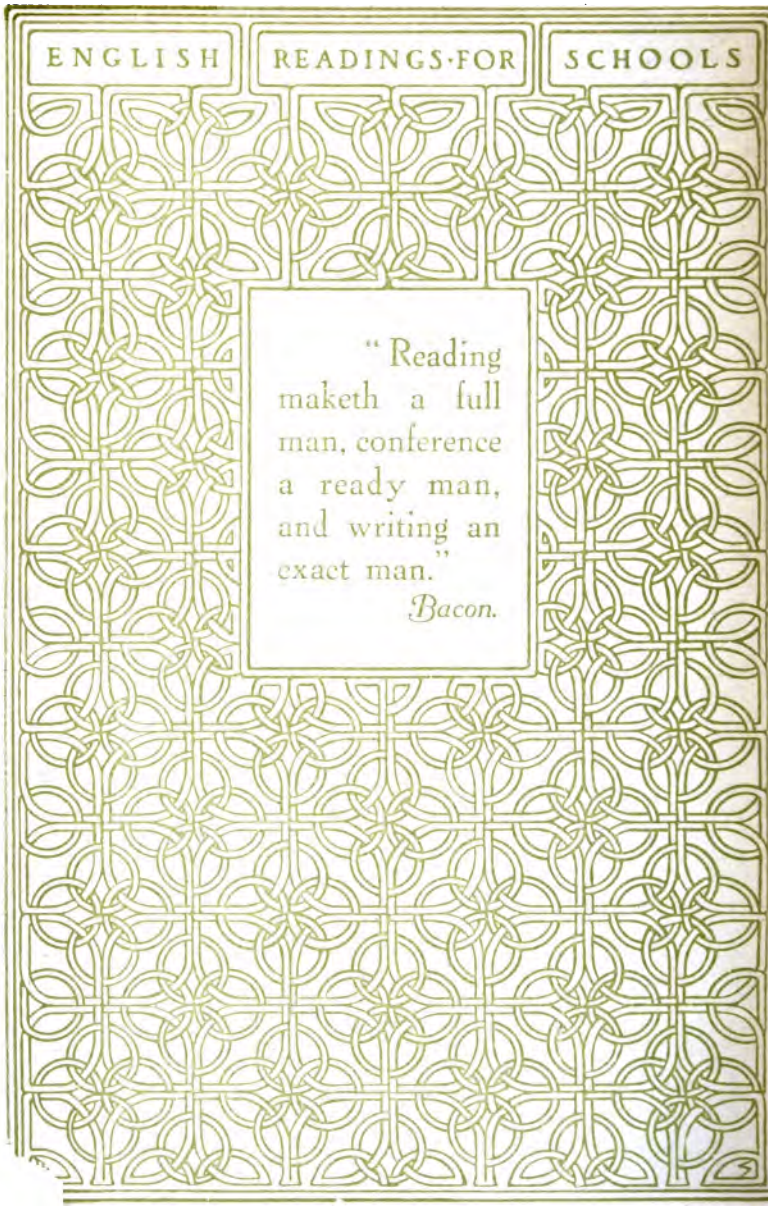
Sae, so.
Sair, sore.
Sleekit, sleek.
Snell, bitter, biting.
Spiers, inquires, asks for one's welfare.
Spring, a Scotch reel.
Stacher, stagger.
Staw, did steal.
Stibble, stubble.
Stoure, dust.
Straths, mountain valleys.
Sturt, struggle, trouble.
Syne, then, ago.

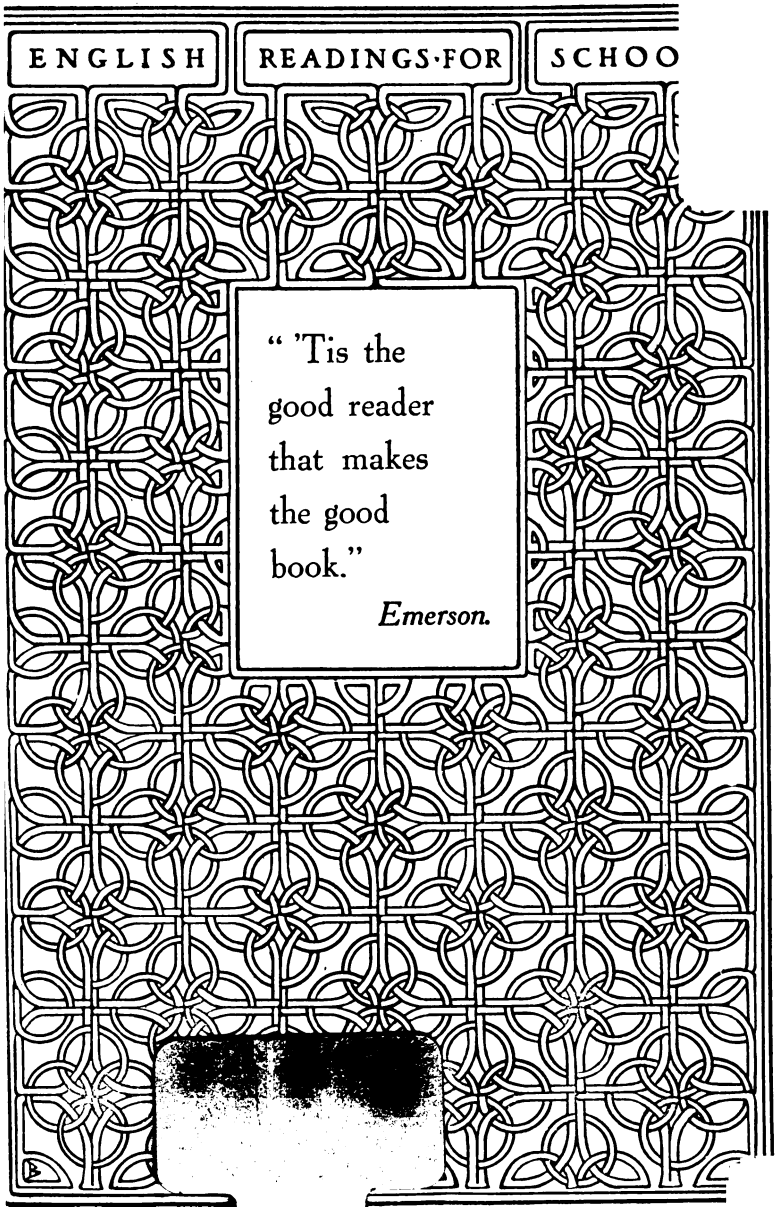
Tentie, watchful, attentive.
Thole, to suffer, to endure.
Thrave, twenty-four sheaves.
Thy lane, by yourself, alone.
Towmond, a twelvemonth.

Uncos, wonders.

Wad, would.
Wa's, walls.
Weel-hain'd, well-saved.
Weet, wet.
Whiles, sometimes.
Willie waught, a hearty draught.

'Yont, beyond.


ENGLISH
READINGS·FOR
SCHOOLS
"Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man."
Bacon.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" 'Tis the good reader that makes the good book."
Emerson.